

NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) Program Requirements and Guidance

Effective SFY 2012-2013

Issue Date: August 6, 2012



NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) Program Requirements and Guidance

Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction 1-1

Section 2: The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee

- A. Purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee 2-1
- B. Committee Structure and Meetings 2-1
- C. Committee Authority 2-3
- D. Additional Functions-Committee and Contractor 2-4
- E. Reporting Program Progress 2-6

Section 3: The NC Pre-K Child

- A. NC Pre-K Child Enrollment Eligibility 3-1
- B. NC Pre-K Eligibility Form 3-3
- C. Eligibility for Families at or below 75% of State Median Income ... 3-4
- D. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families/Maintenance of Effort 3-4
- E. Definitions and Recommended Documents for Verification 3-5
- F. Children with Unique Needs 3-6

Section 4: The NC Pre-K Site

- A. Facility Requirements 4-1
- B. Official NC Pre-K Day and Year 4-1
- C. Program Attendance Policy 4-2
- D. Nutrition 4-2
- E. Transportation 4-2
- F. Wrap-around Services 4-3
- G. Religious Activities 4-3

Section 5: The NC Pre-K Classroom

- A. Child Health Assessments 5-1
- B. Developmental Screening 5-2
- C. Early Learning Standards and Curricula 5-2
- D. Instructional Assessment 5-4
- E. Staff-to-Child Ratio and Class Size 5-4
- F. Mixed-Age Classrooms 5-4
- G. Rest Time 5-5
- H. Indoor and Outdoor Learning Environments 5-5
- I. Family Engagement 5-6

Section 6: The NC Pre-K Staff

- A. Site-Level Administrator Licensure and Credentials 6-1
- B. Teacher Education, Licensure and Credentials 6-1
- C. Teacher Assistant Education and Credentials 6-2
- D. Substitute Staff 6-3
- E. Staff Time 6-4
- F. Professional Development Requirements 6-4
- G. Compensation for Instructional Staff 6-5

Section 7: Evaluation and Monitoring

- A. ECERS-R Assessments 7-1
- B. Reported Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations 7-2
- C. Program and Fiscal Monitoring of Local NC Pre-K Programs 7-2
- D. Monitoring Timeline 7-6
- E. Monitoring Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and
 Maintenance of Effort (MOE) 7-7

Section 1: Introduction

The NC Pre-K Program is a program of the Division of Child Development and Early Education in the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

The NC Pre-K Program is designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-olds. The program requirements are built on the premise that to be successful academically in school, children need to be prepared in all five of the developmental domains outlined by the National Education Goals Panel. Each of these domains is critical to children's well-being and for their success in reading and math as they come to school. The five domains, as reflected in *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success* are:

- Approaches to learning
- Emotional and social development
- Health and physical development
- Language development and communication
- Cognitive development

The requirements are designed to ensure that a high-quality pre-kindergarten classroom experience is provided for eligible four-year-olds in each local NC Pre-K Program and that, to the extent possible, uniformity exists across the state.

Guidance:

Program *Guidance* is included in some sections of this document. The purpose of this *Guidance* is to provide additional clarification to the requirements, when needed, and to encourage best practices in serving children in the NC Pre-K Program. The *Guidance* is intended to direct local NC Pre-K committees, contractors and sites to adopt policies and implement practices that address critical components of providing high-quality pre-kindergarten that meet the needs of all children.

Effective Practices Briefs

The Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) also recommends that programs use the *Effective Practices Briefs* listed below. These briefs offer additional guidance for best practices in pre-kindergarten classrooms:

- Developmental Screening of Children in Pre-Kindergarten, July 2010
- Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers, August 2010
- Pre-Kindergarten Curricula, August 2010
- Assessment of Children in Pre-Kindergarten, August 2010

Additional *Effective Practices Briefs* may be issued over time, as well as updates to the briefs when needed. Briefs currently available can be downloaded from the Office of Early Learning website: <http://www.earlylearning.nc.gov/InfoforEducators/effectivePractices.asp>

The *NC Pre-K Program Requirements & Guidance* and the *NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contracts Manual* may be downloaded from the Division of Child Development and Early Education website: http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/general/mb_ncprek.asp

All NC Pre-K programs must comply with the Requirements. Requests for exceptions to the Requirements as specified in this document must be made in writing by the NC Pre-K local contractor to the Division of Child Development and Early Education:

Division of Child Development and Early Education
NC Department of Health and Human Services
2201 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2075
919-662-4499 – Phone / 1-800-859-0829

www.ncchildcare.net

Section 2: The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee

A. Purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee

The NC Pre-K Program is built upon a system of existing local school boards and districts, private child care providers, and other entities that demonstrate the ability to provide high quality pre-kindergarten services for eligible 4-year olds.

The NC Pre-K Program requires that every county (or region) participating in NC Pre-K must establish and maintain a County/Region NC Pre-K Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to:

1. Select a contractor agency;
2. Develop operational policies and procedures;
3. Ensure collaboration and shared responsibility for developing, approving, and implementing the local plan for delivering NC Pre-K services at the community level;
4. Ensure that services are built on the existing early childhood service delivery system, and that service providers in the community with the ability to provide NC Pre-K services have the opportunity to express interest and be considered;
5. Provide ongoing, collaborative advice about local policies and procedures in the implementation of NC Pre-K services; and
6. Provide oversight for the local program (both programmatic and fiscal).

B. Committee Structure and Meetings

Co-Chairs

The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee must be co-chaired by the school superintendent (or designee) for the local education agency (LEA) and the board chair (or designee) for the local Smart Start Partnership. If a designee is assigned, it must be done in writing and the designee must have the same decision-making authority as the school superintendent or local partnership board chair. The contract administrator (person named in the NC Pre-K Plan) shall not serve as the chair of the NC Pre-K Committee.

If there is more than one LEA or local Smart Start partnership in a county or region, one superintendent and one local Smart Start board chair may be designated to serve as the co-chairs. All superintendents (or designees) and local Smart Start board chairs (or designees) in a county or region must be members of the committee.

Membership

The co-chairs are responsible for appointing the committee members and convening the committee according to the *NC Pre-K Program Requirements & Guidance*. Appointments shall be made annually. The co-chairs should create an independent County/Region NC Pre-K Committee. However, they may designate another functioning early childhood committee or board in the county/region that has the appropriate membership to serve in this capacity. If

an existing early childhood committee is designated to serve in this capacity, the existing early childhood committee must officially adjourn from its meeting and requirements, then officially reconvene as the NC Pre-K Committee operating under NC Pre-K Requirements, with the required co-chairs and membership to perform NC Pre-K functions.

Committee membership must be kept current in the online NC Pre-KPlan, and shall consist of the following:

In addition to the co-chairs, representatives to the local NC Pre-K Committee must include:

1. Licensed child care center (4- or 5-star license) representative,
2. Head Start program representative,
3. Parent of preschool-age children (especially children who are at-risk) representative,
4. Child care resource and referral agency or another child-serving agency representative,
5. Department of Social Services or other child care subsidy funding agency representative, and
6. Public schools Exceptional Children's preschool program representative(s).

Guidance:

In addition to the mandated members, the following representatives are strongly encouraged.

1. County cooperative extension agency representative,
2. Local interagency coordinating council representative,
3. County/regional departments of health and mental health representative(s),
4. Early childhood professional organizations representative(s),
5. Local business community representative(s),
6. Military representative,
7. Early childhood representative from a university, community college/higher education, and/or,
8. Child Care Health Consultant or health professional representative.

Committee Meetings

The Committee is a public body subject to the [Open Meeting Law](#) (G.S. Chapter 143, Article 33C) and [Public Records Law](#) (G.S. Chapter 132) and must operate in accordance with their obligations under those statutes.

The committee, under the direction of the co-chairs, should set a meeting schedule and establish protocol that allows the committee to fulfill its functions. The committee must maintain minutes of all meetings that document: 1) meeting attendees; 2) items discussed; and 3) actions taken or decisions made. In addition to regular meetings, the **Committee must meet prior to May 31** to advise planning and document approval of the NC Pre-K plan for the following year.

C. Committee Authority

Actions Requiring Full Committee Approval

The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee is the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program and is authorized to do the following:

1. Conduct annual planning for NC Pre-K and approve an implementation plan. All committee members must read and agree to the Assurances and Requirements, and sign Section 1, which must be submitted, along with a copy of the minutes of the meeting, to the Division of Child Development and Early Education by **May 31**.
2. Select or change the contract administrative agency (the Contractor).

Minutes and signatures of all committee members must be submitted to the Division of Child Development and Early Education for items 1 and 2.

3. Approve distribution of funding.
4. Review and approve the provider reimbursement strategy (i.e., payment rates to providers and other related costs).
5. Approve provider transportation charges to/from the NC Pre-K program.
6. Approve costs that may be charged to cover the full/partial costs of meals when children do not qualify for free/reduced priced lunch.
7. Approve adding new sites or non-voluntary termination of sites in the County/Region Plan.
8. Approve requests to increase or decrease the budget involving NC Pre-K funds requesting funds to serve additional children.

Items 3 through 8 require committee approval but do not require the signature of all Committee members. The minutes of the Committee meetings shall be kept on file and shall indicate members present, decisions made, and results of votes.

Actions Not Requiring the Full Committee

In cases where decisions must be made before the Committee can be convened, the Contract Administrator and/or Committee co-chairs may do the following on behalf of the Committee:

9. Approve moving child placements across sites.
10. Approve increases or decreases in the budget involving other resources accessed (but not state NC Pre-K funds).

For **actions 9 & 10**, signatures of the Committee co-chairs are required. A report of all actions must be reported back to the Committee.

D. Additional Functions – Committee and Contractor

The Committee serves in an advisory role to the Contract Administrator in the development and implementation of local policies and procedures for implementing NC Pre-K, including the following:

1. Developing and implementing a coordinated process for recruiting, identifying, and placing four-year-old children who are at-risk;
2. Participating in collaborative efforts to offer professional development services to early childhood programs in the community;
3. Demonstrating and documenting how programs are accessing resources other than those provided by NC Pre-K;
4. Documenting agreements with other community agencies regarding the provision of services to young children with disabilities;
5. Developing and implementing a written transportation plan showing how the transportation needs of participating children will be met;
6. Developing and implementing a written transition plan showing how the needs of participating children will be met as they transition into pre-kindergarten and then into kindergarten;
7. Developing and implementing a written family engagement plan to implement strategies designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that promote shared decision-making.
8. Developing and implementing a written plan for working with children and families with limited English proficiency.
9. Providing all families of participating children with information about access to health insurance such as NC Health Check (Medicaid for Children) and the importance of a medical and dental home for their children;
10. Identifying and using community resources to develop a plan for obtaining child health assessments within the required timeframe;
11. Developing a plan for consultation services from a qualified health consultant for all sites; and
12. Documenting a process for ensuring that qualified eligible teachers and teacher assistants are compensated at the appropriate levels.

Guidance:

Transportation Plan:

A written transportation plan should address transportation for children to and from all NC Pre-K sites. In developing the plan, the Committee and Contractor should identify community resources that are available and work with the school system, as feasible. Legislation allows for transportation of any NC Pre-K child to any NC Pre-K site on public school buses. If, after careful review, it is determined that transportation cannot be provided, without creating a participation barrier the contractor must maintain a written record of what was decided through the committee process.

Transition Plan:

The written transition plan should be developed by the Committee and Contractor and should include these components:

1. Specify how children will transition into the NC Pre-K classroom.
2. Specify how children will transition into kindergarten.
3. Reflect the diversity and uniqueness of children, families and communities.
4. Be revised as ongoing transition efforts are expanded.

Additional information regarding transitions can be found in the Ready Set Go transitions series at <http://www.earlylearning.nc.gov/InfoforEducators/readySchools.asp> or <http://www.readysetk.org/>

Medical and Dental Home

The Committee and Contractor should work with all NC Pre-K sites as well as with community health care resources (e.g., Child Care Health Consultants or N.C. Health Check coordinators) to assist families in securing health insurance, a medical home (primary health care provider), and dental home (dentist) for their child. At a minimum, the contractor should work with sites to give families information about the N.C. Health Check (Medicaid for Children) health insurance program and about the importance of a medical and dental home. The contractor should ensure that this information is available for all families of children served by NC Pre-K. The information may be distributed: 1) at a county-wide event; 2) at the site level; and/or 3) directly to families. In addition, the contractor may also choose to give families a list of local primary health care providers. There are free bilingual materials (English/Spanish) available online from the NC Healthy Start Foundation at: www.nchealthystart.org

To view a copy of the “Health Check / NC Health Choice Fact Sheet”, go to: http://www.nchealthystart.org/downloads2/HCNCHC_Fact_Sheet.pdf

To view “The Right Call Every Time: Your Medical Home” Brochure, go to: http://www.nchealthystart.org/downloads2/MH_The_right_call.pdf

The “Health Check / NC Health Choice Fact Sheet” is now translated and available online in several languages: Arabic, Chinese, Hmong, Korean, Montagnard, Spanish, and Vietnamese. To print out a copy in one of these languages go to: <http://www.nchealthystart.org/outreach/index.html>

Child Health Assessment:

The plan to support sites in meeting the child health assessment requirement would include notifying all families at the time of application to the program that the child’s health assessment is required before being enrolled or within 30 days after a child enters the NC Pre-K program. The Contractor and sites should work with the parent/family to coordinate transportation and other appropriate resources, such as the public health department, public school health nurse, Child Care Health Consultants, and other health care and medical consultants in the community to help families meet this requirement.

Plan for Health Consultation Services:

A plan for health consultation services for all NC Pre-K sites should address the provision of services to sites from a qualified health consultant (either a licensed pediatric health professional or a health professional with specific training in health consultation for early childhood programs). Such a plan may include defined policies and practices to ensure health promotion and prevention of infection and injury, and inclusion of children with special health care needs.

E. Reporting Program Progress

The Contractor must report to the County/Region NC Pre-K Committee throughout the year on implementation of the County/Region Plan including:

1. Program progress (recruiting, child identification and eligibility, enrollment, and attendance);
2. Site updates (child placement; star licensure progress);
3. Site staff education levels, staff salaries and progress toward goals (administrators, teachers, assistants);
4. Professional development activities;
5. Efforts to collaborate with other agencies;
6. Strengths and barriers to service delivery;
7. Efforts to implement plans related to transportation, transitions, helping families access health insurance and a medical and dental home, helping ensure child health assessments, and consultation from a qualified health professional; and
8. Fiscal and budget reports, including funds received and funds paid to subcontractor(s).

Section 3: The NC Pre-K Child

A. NC Pre-K Child Enrollment Eligibility

Local Contractors are responsible for determining NC Pre-K Child Eligibility. This responsibility, along with other administrative duties, determined that NC Pre-K contracts issued by DCDEE are Financial Assistance contracts. Any NC Pre-K Contractor wishing to delegate eligibility determination responsibilities to a sub-contractor must request approval from DCDEE before delegating this responsibility. Characteristics and requirements of Financial Assistance contracts are described in the *NC Pre-K Fiscal & Contracts Manual*.

Age Requirements

1. Children to be enrolled must be four years of age on or before **August 31st** of the program year.
2. Children age eligible for kindergarten cannot be served with NC Pre-K funds.

Income Requirements

A child that meets the age requirements is eligible for NC Pre-K if the child is from a family whose gross income is at or below 75% of the State Median Income level.

Additional Eligibility Criteria

Children of Eligible Military Families:

Any age-eligible child who is a child of either of the following shall be eligible for the program, without regard to income: (i) an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States, including the North Carolina National Guard, State military forces, or a reserve component of the Armed Forces, who was ordered to active duty by the proper authority within the last 18 months or is expected to be ordered within the next 18 months or (ii) a member of the Armed Forces of the United States, including the North Carolina National Guard, State military forces, or a reserve component of the Armed Forces, who was injured or killed while serving on active duty.

Additional Eligible Children:

In addition, up to 20% of age-eligible children enrolled may have family incomes in excess of seventy-five percent (75%) of the state median income if the child has one of the risk factors identified below:

- Identified developmental disability.
- Limited English Proficiency (LEP) as indicated by the family and/or child speaking limited or no English in the home;
- An educational need as indicated by the child's performance results on an approved developmental screening;
- A chronic health condition as indicated by the diagnosis from a professional health care provider;

Guidance:**Children of Eligible Military Families**

Children who have a parent or guardian in the military often experience increased stress levels. Contract administrators are strongly encouraged to identify resources in the community and help make connections for families to support children in these circumstances.

Clarification for Additional Eligibility Criteria

- Developmental disabilities are identified through screenings followed by targeted tests and measures administered by education and/or health professionals. They may include but are not limited to cerebral palsy, sight or vision impairment, orthopedic impairment, or autism.
- An educational need must be supported by the results from an approved developmental screening instrument. NC Pre-K approved developmental screening instruments can be found in Section 5 under the heading of “Developmental Screening”.
- Limited English proficiency is identified when the family and/or child speaks limited or no English in the home. Contract administrators are strongly encouraged to identify resources in the community to support children and families with limited English proficiency.
- Chronic health conditions must be documented by a professional health care provider. These conditions may include but are not limited to: asthma, diabetes, cancer, sickle cell anemia, juvenile arthritis or other health conditions that the health care provider has diagnosed and identified as having the potential to interfere with a child’s development and learning.

Priority to Serve the Unserved Population

Contract Administrators are strongly encouraged to serve children who have received no prior early education services outside the home in a group setting. In addition, continuity of care should be taken into consideration for eligible 4 year old children moving into a NC Pre-K classroom who have been previously enrolled in that site.

B. NC Pre-K Program Eligibility Form

NC Pre-K Program Eligibility Form
(REVISED: Effective July 23, 2012)

Date Completed: _____
 Child's Name: _____ Birth Date: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: () _____

Determining Eligibility Factors

- 1) Will the child be four years of age on or before **August 31st** of the program year?
 ___ **No (Child not eligible)**
 ___ **Yes (Move to question 2.)**
- 2) What is the annual family gross income? _____ What is the family size? _____

Are the parent(s) – check all that apply: (These are not eligibility requirements but this information will help DCDEE to leverage federal funding)

- Employed**
- Seeking employment**
- In post-secondary education**
- In high school or in a GED program**
- In job training**
- Other**

- 3) Does the family's countable income fall at or below 75% of the State Median Income (SMI)?
 ___ **No (Complete Tables A and B and then move to question 4.)**
 ___ **Yes (Child is eligible; complete Tables A and B.)**

TABLE A		
Check one box for each:	Yes	No
Child has identified developmental disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child of eligible military family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child has Limited English Proficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child has chronic health condition(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child has identified educational need	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. TABLE B (TANF/MOE only)	Check one
130% of poverty and below	<input type="checkbox"/>
131 - 185% of poverty	<input type="checkbox"/>
186 - 200% of poverty	<input type="checkbox"/>
201 - 250% of poverty	<input type="checkbox"/>
251 - 300% of poverty	<input type="checkbox"/>
Above 300% of poverty	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 4) **(Please complete this question if you have answered "No" to question 3.)**

Have one or more boxes in Table A been checked "Yes"?

- ___ **No (Child is not eligible)**
 ___ **Yes (**Up to 20% of children in families with family incomes above 75% of the state median income may be deemed eligible and enrolled in NC Pre-K if the child has other designated risk factors. Children of eligible military families may be served without regard to income and are NOT required to be included in the allowed 20% of over-income families.)**

C. Eligibility for Families at or below 75% of State Median Income

Income eligibility for NC Pre-K is determined by family size and gross income.

Table 1. 75 % STATE MEDIAN INCOME*	
Family Size	75 Percent State Median Income
1	\$26,507
2	\$34,663
3	\$42,819
4	\$50,975
5	\$59,130
6	\$67,286
7	\$68,816
8	\$70,345
9	\$71,874
10	\$73,403
11	\$74,933
12	\$76,462

*Based on August 1, 2011 North Carolina Subsidized Child Care Eligibility Limits

D. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families/Maintenance of Effort

When a child is determined eligible for services, a % of poverty category must be determined (see Table 2), entered on the NC Pre-K Program Eligibility Form, and in NC Pre-K Kids. **This information will be used for the purposes of meeting TANF/MOE requirements and will not affect eligibility determination.**

Table 2. INCOME ELIGIBILITY LEVEL*						
<i>NC Pre-K 2012-13</i>						
Family Size	130%	150%	185%	200%	250%	300%
1	\$14,521	\$16,755	\$20,665	\$22,340	\$27,925	\$33,510
2	\$19,669	\$22,695	\$27,991	\$30,260	\$37,825	\$45,390
3	\$24,817	\$28,635	\$35,317	\$38,180	\$47,725	\$57,270
4	\$29,965	\$34,575	\$42,643	\$46,100	\$57,625	\$69,150
5	\$35,113	\$40,515	\$49,969	\$54,020	\$67,525	\$81,030
6	\$40,261	\$46,455	\$57,295	\$61,940	\$77,425	\$92,910
7	\$45,409	\$52,395	\$64,621	\$69,860	\$87,325	\$104,790
8	\$50,557	\$58,335	\$71,947	\$77,780	\$97,225	\$116,670
9	\$55,705	\$64,275	\$79,273	\$85,700	\$107,125	\$128,550
10	\$60,853	\$70,215	\$86,599	\$93,620	\$117,025	\$140,430
11	\$66,001	\$76,155	\$93,925	\$101,540	\$126,925	\$152,310
12	\$71,149	\$82,095	\$101,251	\$109,460	\$136,825	\$164,190

*Based on 2012 Federal Poverty Levels Revised July 26, 2012

E. Definitions and Recommended Documentation for Verification

During the application process, at a minimum, the items and documentation identified in the chart below must be collected for each child and family. This information will serve two purposes: (1) to determine NC Pre-K eligibility and (2) for the state to determine TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) and CCDF (Child Care and Development Fund) Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and Matching contributions.

Element	Parent, guardian or caregiver statement substantiated by parent, guardian or caregiver signature is required for income, military status, family size, kinship.
Child's Name	Parent, guardian or caregiver statement.
Birth Date	Child's birth certificate, or medical records, or recorded in Family Bible
Child's SS #	Verification of child's social security number, if applicable
County	County of child's residence as documented on child's application.
Military Status	Parent, guardian or caregiver statement (signature required).
Kinship (signature required)	<p>Kinship is established when the child in care lives with an adult blood relative or with a non-relative who has legal custody or guardianship. If child is living with non-relatives or other adults that have legal custody or guardianship, guardian must present a <u>legal document</u> verifying they have <u>legal custody</u> or <u>guardianship</u>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A parent - This includes a natural mother or father, a legal mother or father, or adoptive parent(s) after issuance of the final order of adoption. 2. An alleged mother or father or other alleged maternal or paternal relative. 3. A blood or half-blood relative or adoptive relative limited to: brother, sister, grandparent, great-grandparent, great-great-grandparent, uncle or aunt, great-uncle or aunt, great-great-uncle or aunt, nephew, niece, first cousin. 4. A step relative limited to: stepparent, stepbrother, and stepsister. 5. Spouses of anyone in the above groups, even after the marriage has been terminated by death or divorce. 6. Other adults who have legal custody or guardianship of a child. Foster parents do not have legal custody or guardianship; custody remains with the Department of Social Services.
Family Size (signature required) (Number in Family: parents, stepparents, all siblings)	<p>Include the following individuals living in the child's home:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The NC Pre-K child plus all minor brothers and sisters, half brothers, half sisters, stepbrothers and stepsisters. 2. Parents and stepparents of these children. 3. Incarcerated or institutionalized individuals are <u>not</u> included. 4. If a child is living with a relative like a grandparent, aunt, uncle, etc., or an individual who has <u>legal custody</u>, then the family size consists of the NC Pre-K child, plus all minor brothers and sisters, half brothers, half sisters, stepbrothers and stepsisters living in the same household. The adults are <u>not</u> included, nor are the children of these adults counted. 5. If a child is living with a relative like a grandparent, aunt, uncle, etc., or an individual who has <u>legal guardianship</u>, then the family size consists of the NC Pre-K child, plus all minor brothers and sisters, half-brothers, half-sisters, stepbrothers and stepsisters living in the same household. The adults and children of these adults <u>are</u> counted as well.
Family Income (To convert weekly income to annual, multiply weekly by 4.3 to obtain monthly, then by 12 for annual.)	<p>Count parent or stepparent's regular gross income (signature required).</p> <p>Regular gross income may include income earned through sales commissions averaged over several months, regular employment through a temporary employment agency, child support, alimony payments, and workman's compensation.</p> <p>Excluded from regular gross income are parent, stepparent and child Supplemental Security Income, adoptive assistance, foster care payments, and irregular income (e.g., over-time, temporary unemployment pay, Work First, Food Stamps, student loans).</p> <p>If legal custodian, or other caregiver, only count the child's income, including Social Security Income and Child Support Payments. Do not count Supplemental Security Income. Count income from any <u>minor</u> siblings living in the home.</p> <p>If legal guardian count the adults income, child's income, including Social Security Income and Child Support Payments. Count income from any <u>minor</u> siblings living in the home. Do not count Supplemental Security Income.</p>

F. Children with Unique Needs

When a teacher, parent, or other involved person has significant concerns about a NC Pre-K child's development, sensory function, or behavior, he/she shall notify the local school system for assistance. The following steps shall be followed:

1. If, as a result of information gathered through the screening process, or from experience working with a particular NC Pre-K child, the NC Pre-K program staff has significant concerns about that child and the program's ability to address his/her needs, the program administrator shall notify the local school system's Preschool Exceptional Children Program for assistance.
2. The NC Pre-K administrator, teacher, and parent, in consultation with the school system's Preschool Exceptional Children Program and other available resources, shall work together to develop a coordinated plan to support the NC Pre-K child's placement in the NC Pre-K program. Every effort shall be made to maintain the child's enrollment and participation.
3. If efforts to access the consultation needed to develop a coordinated plan of support prove unsuccessful, the NC Pre-K Contract Administrator shall contact the Division of Child Development and Early Education for assistance.

Section 4: The NC Pre-K Site

A. Facility Requirements

All facilities must be licensed at the 4 or 5 star level unless a waiver or extension is granted by DCDEE.

Pursuant to 2011 legislation, public school classrooms must become licensed through DCDEE. If DCDEE determines that meeting licensure standards for a public school constitutes a significant barrier to access to NC Pre-K for at-risk students, the Division will grant an extension and create a transition plan to assist public schools in obtaining licensure. Programs that are concerned that they will never be able to become licensed, even with an extension, should contact their DCDEE Child Care Consultant to discuss available options.

Guidance:

Public school licensure:

Unlicensed public school programs should contact the appropriate DCDEE Lead Child Care Consultant to begin the steps toward licensure. The DCDEE Lead Child Care Consultant will guide the licensing process and identify any barriers, potential solutions, and if warranted, extensions for the licensing process.

B. Official NC Pre-K Day and Year

NC Pre-K sites must provide a Pre-K program for a minimum of 6.5 hours per day for 180 instructional days per school calendar year.

Guidance:

Official day and year requirements:

Whenever possible the hours of operation should be consistent with the school system in the geographic area where the site is located. Additionally, the site's 180-day schedule should generally track the local public school calendar. Variations from this guidance should be addressed between the Contractor and site.

Home Visits/Staggered Entry:

Days that are set aside for home visits and for staggered entry at the beginning of the school year may be included as part of the 180-day school calendar year. Throughout the school year a home visit may also count as an attendance day when used for programmatic purposes or for a child that is unable to come to school due to special circumstances (e.g. extended illness; hospitalization, and recovery).

Staff Professional Development:

Up to five days may be set aside for professional development and included as part of the 180-day school calendar year. Professional development days may not be used as teacher optional attendance workdays. Documentation of professional development contact hours, objectives and dates should be maintained by staff, Site Administrators, and Contractors.

C. Program Attendance Policy

Child attendance must be taken daily and submitted monthly for reimbursement. A child must attend ten days of the month in order for the Contractor to receive payment. For the first and last month of classroom operation when limited attendance days are available, a child must attend at least one day in order for the Contractor to receive payment. *(See the NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contract Manual, for detailed requirements on the payment process.)*

When a child enrolled in the NC Pre-K program has been absent for three consecutive days, the Site-level Administrator should contact the family and determine the child's participation status. Any changes must be reported to the local Contractor.

Guidance:

Contractors and sites should work with families to support a child's attendance and participation in NC Pre-K. NC Pre-K Site Administrators should document attempts to contact the family, as well as decisions regarding the child's continued participation in the program. Every effort should be made to maintain the child's placement and participation in NC Pre-K.

D. Nutrition

Sites must provide breakfast and/or snacks and lunch meeting USDA requirements during the regular school day. The partial/full cost of meals may be charged when families do not qualify for free/reduced price meals. This parental fee must be approved by the NC Pre-K Committee.

E. Transportation

When all other options have been exhausted, families with children participating in NC Pre-K may be charged a nominal amount for transportation to/from the NC Pre-K site if approved by the NC Pre-K Committee. However, children who are at-risk should not be denied services based on the family's inability to pay.

F. Wrap-around Services

Families may also be charged for the cost of wraparound services provided before or after the NC Pre-K day, during holidays, or during summer months. NC Pre-K funds may not be used for such costs.

Guidance:

While NC Pre-K funding cannot be used for wraparound services (time periods before or after the NC Pre-K day), sites should attempt to meet the needs of families and children for full day care. When wraparound services are provided before and/or after the regular school day, during holidays, or summer months, the provider may charge a fee for that service or accept a subsidy voucher from a participating family. Instructional staff (teacher and teacher assistant) 40 hour work week should not include before and/or after care services.

G. Religious Activities

Activities, instruction, or communications which promote religious beliefs shall not be directed toward children participating in NC Pre-K during the NC Pre-K school day.

Section 5: The NC Pre-K Classroom

A. Child Health Assessments

A health assessment is required to be on file at the NC Pre-K site within 30 days after a child enters the NC Pre-K program and must have been conducted within 12 months of program entry. The health provider is responsible for making appropriate referrals as indicated by the health assessment. The health assessment must include:

1. Physical examination
2. Updated immunizations
3. Vision screening
4. Hearing screening
5. Dental screening

All health assessments must be reviewed to ensure that all necessary referrals related to the results have been made.

Guidance:

Forms:

Sites are encouraged to use the Kindergarten Health Assessment Report (Form # PPS-2K Rev. 1/11), which is available through local health departments, public schools, and at http://ncdhhs.gov/dph/wch/doc/aboutus/KHA_1-11.pdf or <http://www.nchealthyschools.org>. The Kindergarten Health Assessment Report may be used in lieu of the DCDEE Health Assessment Form.

For sites that use other forms, additional documentation may be necessary to meet all NC Pre-K requirements.

A child's last allowable Medicaid health assessment will meet this requirement.

All components of the health assessment can be completed during the child's physical including the vision, hearing and dental screenings.

Working with families:

If a child's health assessment is not in place on the first day of attendance, the family/parent should be given written notice to have the assessment completed within 30 calendar days or provide written evidence within 30 days of the date that the child has been scheduled for the health assessment.

If the assessment is not completed within 30 calendar days, or an appointment has not been made or has not been kept for the child's health assessment, the parent/family should be notified by the Contract Administrator that the child will lose his/her NC Pre-K placement

unless there are extenuating circumstances. Contractors may request an exception to these timelines based on extenuating circumstances.

Contractors and sites should make every effort to assist families in obtaining a health assessment for their child and should enlist help from other community organizations and agencies.

B. Developmental Screening

All children enrolled in NC Pre-K must receive a developmental screening using an approved screening instrument, unless the child has an existing Individualized Education Program (IEP). The screening shall be conducted by a professional trained in administering the screening. Children must be screened within 90 days after the first day of attendance in the program or within 6 months prior to the first day of attendance.

The NC Pre-K program requires that screening be used solely for the purpose of identifying children who should be referred for further evaluation and testing based on concerns in one or more developmental domains.

Children shall be screened using one of the approved screening instruments listed below:

1. Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (ASQ-3) or Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)
2. Brigance Early Childhood Screen II (3-5 Years), or Brigance Head Start Screen, or Brigance Preschool Screen – II, (under 4 yrs. 11 mos.) or Brigance K & 1 Screen – II (5 yrs.0 mos. and older)
3. Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, Third Edition (DIAL-3) or Fourth Edition (DIAL-4)
4. Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS)

Guidance:

Any professional conducting developmental screening must be trained in the use of the selected screening instrument. Oversight of the screening process should be provided by professional(s) with specialized training and expertise in early childhood assessments. Coordination with community service providers is recommended to avoid duplicate screening of children.

See the Effective Practices Brief on Developmental Screening of Children in Pre-Kindergarten, July 2010 at: <http://www.earlylearning.nc.gov/pdf/EP-DevelopmentalScreeningJuly2010.pdf>

C. Early Learning Standards And Curricula

NC Pre-K program staff must be knowledgeable about *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success*, and use these early learning standards to guide their planning of developmentally

appropriate, high-quality prekindergarten experiences for children. *Foundations* is available at: <http://www.earlylearning.nc.gov/Foundations/ToDownload.asp>

In addition, each NC Pre-K classroom staff shall use an approved curriculum. The selected curriculum must be approved by the NC Child Care Commission. The Child Care Commission shall approve additional curricula during quarterly meetings following a pre-determined timeline. This shall be reflected in the NC Child Care Commission minutes.

The following list represents currently approved preschool curricula:

1. *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, 4th Edition* , Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2002
2. *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, 5th Edition* , Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2010
Approved with the stipulation that programs purchase and use:
Volume 1 The Foundation;
Volume 2 Interest Areas;
Volume 3 Literacy;
Volume 4 Mathematics; and
Volume 5 Objectives for Development and Learning.
3. The Creative Curriculum® system for Preschool, Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2010
4. *The Empowered Child™*, Childtime, 2nd Edition, 2007 (Approved for use in Childtime programs.)
5. *Explorations with Young Children: A Curriculum Guide from the Bank Street College of Education*, Gryphon House, 1992
6. High Reach Learning, High Reach Learning, Inc. 2009
7. *HighScope Preschool Curriculum*, HighScope Press, 2002
8. *Investigator Club Prekindergarten Learning System*, NC Edition, Robert Leslie Publishing, 207-2012
Approved with the stipulation that programs implement the curriculum only in four-year-old classrooms and purchase the complete system, NC edition
9. *Opening the World of Learning™ (OWL)*, Pearson Early Learning, 2005 (Approved with the stipulation that full-year programs have a plan to supplement or extend the curriculum since OWL is designed to cover a school year.
10. *Passports: Experiences for Pre-K Success*, HighReach Learning, 2007 (Approved with the stipulation that programs purchase the *Compass* and at least one set of study/theme materials.)
11. *Tools of the Mind*, 6th Edition, Metropolitan State College of Denver, 2009-2011.
Approved with the stipulation that programs participate in the *Tools of The Mind* professional development offered by the publishers to implement the curriculum and purchase: Bodrova, E. and Leong, D. J., *Tools of the Mind The Vygotskian Approach to Early Childhood Education, 2nd ed.*, Pearson Education, Merrill/Prentice Hall, 2007.
12. *Tutor Time LifeSmart™*, Copyright 2005 (Approved for use in Tutor Time programs.)

Guidance:

See the Effective Practices Brief on Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers, August 2010 at: http://www.earlylearning.nc.gov/_pdf/EP-FoundationsAugust2010.pdf

D. Instructional Assessment

Classroom staff are required to conduct ongoing assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development, as well as to inform instruction. The following instruments meet this requirement.

1. Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum, Ages 3-5 and Teaching Strategies GOLD;
2. Galileo On-line Assessment System
3. HighScope Preschool Child Observation Record (COR) (second edition)
4. Learning Accomplishment Profile – Third Edition (LAP-3)
5. Learning Care System (for use with Tutor Time *LifeSmart*TM and The Empowered ChildTM Childtime)
6. Work Sampling System (Meisels)

Guidance:

See the Effective Practices Brief on Assessment of Children in Pre-Kindergarten, August 2010 at: http://www.earlylearning.nc.gov/_pdf/EP-AssessmentAugust2010.pdf

E. Staff-to-Child Ratio and Class Size

The classroom will not exceed a maximum staff-to-child ratio of 1 to 9 with a maximum class size of 18 children, with one teacher and one assistant teacher per classroom. Classrooms that provide for inclusive settings for children with disabilities may require an adult to child ratio lower than 1 to 9. For LEA-administered public school exceptional children's preschool classrooms, ratios must be in compliance with the North Carolina Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities, Section 1508-2, (Appendix B) at: <http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/policies/nc-policies-governing-services-for-children-with-disabilities>

Guidance:

Inclusive classrooms are encouraged. The value of inclusive settings ensures that each child's strengths, unique learning needs, and abilities are addressed. Inclusive classrooms may require an adult to child ratio lower than 1 to 9.

F. Mixed-age Classrooms

Children may be placed in a NC Pre-K classroom that do not meet age eligibility requirements but these children cannot be funded using NC Pre-K dollars and must not be

reported in the NC Pre-K Plan. When choosing to operate a mixed-age classroom, it is important to ensure developmentally appropriate practices for each child. Consult with your DCDEE Child Care Consultant when considering this option.

G. Rest Time

A rest/quiet period is required for each child every day, the length of which shall be determined according to the individual needs of each child.

During rest time, the staff/child ratio is considered in compliance if at least one staff is in the classroom with children while resting and is visually supervising all children. The second person needed to meet the 1 to 9 ratio must be on the premises, within calling distance of the classroom to remain in compliance.

Guidance:

Preschool-aged children should be provided with a regular time, everyday, when they are encouraged, but not forced, to nap or rest. The nap/rest time should be regularly scheduled, so that it happens at about the same time each day. Preschoolers have often (but not always) outgrown their need for sleep during the day but still benefit from a quiet rest time where they can relax and do quiet activities. The nap/rest schedule must be reasonable for most of the children in the group. For those children who are early risers or non-nappers accommodations must be made to meet their needs such as:

- Children can read books quietly or play quietly with toys on their mat or cot.
- Children can read or play quietly in another part of the classroom away from sleeping children.
- Children may go to another room where early risers or non-nappers can participate in activities, with the necessary supervision.
- Children can go outside where they can participate in free play or specific activities, provided that they are supervised by the required number of staff.

At least one alert staff member is always in the classroom, actively supervising the children with no lapses. Additional staff must be onsite and can be called to assist in the event a need arises.

H. Indoor and Outdoor Learning Environments

Classrooms shall provide high-quality indoor and outdoor learning environments that support the implementation of *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina's Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success*, as well as the chosen curriculum. The outdoor classroom is considered an extension of the learning environment. Both indoor and outdoor environments shall address curricular objectives by encouraging child-initiated, teacher-supported, active learning experiences. Teachers shall arrange for children to be outdoors each and every day, for a minimum of one hour, weather permitting.

I. Family Engagement

NC Pre-K classrooms shall provide meaningful opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education.

NC Pre-Kindergarten Contractors shall develop a comprehensive plan for family engagement to implement strategies designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that promote shared decision-making. The following are examples of meaningful opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education:

- (1) Home visits;
- (2) Formal and informal parent/teacher conferences;
- (3) Classroom visits and options for parents and families to participate in classroom activities;
- (4) Parent education;
- (5) Family involvement in decision making about their own child and about their child's early childhood program; and
- (6) Opportunities to engage families outside of the regular service day.

A log of activities, opportunities, or communications made for family engagement must be on file at the NC Pre-K site.

Section 6: The NC Pre-K Staff

A. Site-Level Administrator Licensure and Credentials

Administrators of NC Pre-K sites must have either a:

NC Principal License, NC Exceptional Children Program Administrator License, or North Carolina Early Childhood Administrator Credential (NCECAC) Level III.

If the site-level administrator has not yet earned the NCECAC Level III, the following will apply:

1. Provisional approval will be given for four years from the time the site began participation with the NC Pre-K program for the administrator with NCECAC I or II to obtain the NCECAC Level III; and
2. Progress toward NCECAC Level III will be considered a minimum of six documented semester hours per year.

Administrators of NC Pre-K sites shall not serve as the NC Pre-K teacher or teacher assistant.

Administrator long term vacancies shall not exceed 12 weeks.

B. Teacher Education, Licensure and Credentials

All lead teachers will hold, or be working toward a North Carolina (NC) Birth through Kindergarten (B-K) or Preschool Add-on Standard Professional II licensure.

Teachers working toward the required education and licensure shall hold a minimum of a BA/BS degree and one of the following requirements:

- (1) NC Initial Provisional Lateral Entry BK License, or
- (2) A North Carolina K-6 license and a provisional Preschool Add-on license, or
- (3) Another North Carolina or other state's license and an NC Provisional B-K license, or
- (4) A BA/BS degree in early childhood education, child development, or a related field, and be eligible for a NC Initial Provisional Lateral Entry B-K License.

All Pre-K teachers who are employed by a nonpublic school must be enrolled with the Early Educator Support, Licensure & Professional Development Unit of the DCDEE.

Pre-K teachers with a BA/BS degree shall make progress toward B-K licensure by completing a minimum of six documented semester hours per year, and achieve the B-K license within three years. The site-level administrator shall maintain documentation available for review by the Division, of the progress toward the required standard.

Teachers who hold a NC Initial Lateral Entry BK License or a NC Provisional BK or Preschool Add-on licenses must submit unofficial transcripts to the EESLPD Unit.

Teachers who hold an SP II license are required to meet professional development requirements during the five-year renewal cycle.

C. Teacher Assistant Education and Credentials

All teacher assistants will have a high school diploma or GED and will hold, or be working toward, a minimum of an Associate Degree in early childhood education or child development (ECE/CD) or a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. Teacher assistants working toward the Associate Degree or CDA shall make progress by completing a minimum of six documented semester hours per year. The site-level administrator shall maintain documentation available for review by the Division of the progress toward the required standard.

Teacher assistants employed by public schools are exempt from this requirement to hold an ECE/CD Associate Degree or CDA if they meet the employment requirements outlined by the federal “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) legislation, and have one of the following:

- (1) Six documented semester hours of coursework in early childhood education, or
- (2) Two years of work experience in an early childhood setting.

Guidance:

Early Educator Support, Licensure and Professional Development (EESLPD) Unit

The Early Educator Support, Licensure and Professional Development (EESLPD) Unit within the NC DHHS-Division of Child Development and Early Education, provides mentoring, evaluation and licensure services in nonpublic schools to support NC Pre-K teachers throughout the licensure process.

http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/general/mb_ncprek_detail.asp

NC Pre-K teachers who are employed in a nonpublic school holding a NC BK license must

- maintain an annual **Professional Development Plan**. Teachers must participate in professional development activities that align with the expectations of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, in the areas of leadership, diverse learners, content knowledge, facilitating learning, reflective professional practice and child outcomes.

NC Pre-K teachers who are employed in a nonpublic school holding a NC BK Standard Professional II license must

- submit certificates and/or transcripts of required professional development by **May 15** of each year of the five-year renewal cycle to support the renewal of the SP II license, which is renewed in year five. Training and/or coursework completed must support the birth-through-kindergarten licensure area that aligns with the North

Carolina Professional Teaching Standards in the areas of leadership, diverse learners, content knowledge, facilitative learning, technology and professional practice. The training/coursework must equal a minimum of 7.5 units of credit (CEUs) or 75 contact hours. One unit is equal to 10 clock hours, or one quarter hour or two-thirds of a semester hour of IHE (college or university) credit. **Note: classroom teaching experience is no longer accepted for licensure renewal.**

- 1 renewal credit (1 CEU or 10 contact hours) must address literacy which aligns to Standard 3 – Content/Knowledge **and**
- 1 renewal credit (1 CEU or 10 contact hours) in Birth-through-Kindergarten content that aligns to Standard 3 or 4 (content knowledge or facilitating/teaching the content)

NC Pre-K teachers holding **less than** a NC BK license (NC Lateral Entry or Provisional BK or Provisional Preschool Add-on) and employed by a nonpublic school must:

- obtain a Plan of Study from an accredited college/university with an approved BK licensure program (http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/pdf_forms/NCPre-K_ApprovedBKProgramsNC.pdf) or the Nash Regional Alternative Licensing Center (<http://www.ralc.us/>).
- submit unofficial transcripts to the EESLPD Unit within **10 workdays of the close of each semester to support the Plan of Study**. A minimum of 6 semester hours must be completed annually based on the teacher's individual Plan of Study.
- **Complete a minimum of 6 hours of coursework prior to June 30. All coursework required by the Plan of Study must be completed within *three* years of the issuance of the Lateral Entry License and *five* years of the issuance of a Provisional License.**

Bilingual staff:

Sites that serve children and families who do not speak English or have limited English proficiency are encouraged to hire staff that are fluent in the child's native language.

D. Substitute Staff

When a member of the NC Pre-K teaching staff is unable to work, a substitute staff person must be provided to maintain the staff-to-child ratio requirements and must be able to implement the program in accordance with the NC Pre-K Program Requirements. Substitute staff must be at least 18 years of age and meet the following minimum qualifications:

Short Term Vacancies

When teachers are absent from the Pre-K classroom for 15 or fewer days, the following requirements apply:

Nonpublic Schools (Private Child Care/Pre-K Settings): Substitutes in private settings must have at least a high school diploma or a GED, and completed at least

one course in early childhood education or child development, such as the North Carolina Early Childhood Credential.

Public School Settings: Substitutes must meet the requirements of the substitute policy consistent with the local education agency (LEA).

Long Term Vacancies

When teachers are absent from the Pre-K classroom for 16 or more attendance days, the substitute staff must hold at least an Associate's Degree in early childhood education/child development or a 4-year degree in a related field.

Substitutes for teacher assistants must be at least 18 years of age and have a minimum of a high school diploma or a GED.

Substitute staff employed for long term vacancies of teachers and teacher assistants shall not exceed 12 weeks.

E. Staff Time

Instructional staff (Teachers & Teacher Assistants) shall work in direct contact with children in the NC Pre-K program for at least a 32.5 hour work week. In addition to these direct, day-to-day instructional experiences, instructional staff will require additional time for related instructional activities, including time for planning, scheduling and conducting home visits, meeting with children's families, and/or attending required professional development activities. These related activities shall take place outside of the NC Pre-K day of direct teacher-child contact, and are not to exceed 40 hours per week.

F. Professional Development Requirements

Licensed Administrators, Teachers, and Teacher Assistants in nonpublic and public schools will participate in professional development consistent with the State Board of Education policy.

Administrators, Teachers, and Teacher Assistants in nonpublic school settings, working toward Pre-K qualifications will participate in a minimum of six documented semester hours per year.

Guidance:

NC Pre-K Teachers and Site Administrators who are employed by a nonpublic school are required to complete a series of professional development prerequisite sessions that support the teacher licensure process upon enrollment with the Early Educator Support, Licensure and Professional Development (EESLPD) Unit and, as required annually, based on changes and updates to the teacher licensure and evaluation policy approved by NC State Board of Education.

When planning professional development, NC licensed teachers are required to follow their professional development plans, which are developed based on their formally assessed teaching practices.

Up to five of the 180 NC Pre-K service days may be used for state- or county/regional-sponsored professional development, to the extent that additional hardships are not created for children and families in the NC Pre-K classroom. NC Pre-K staff may attend more than five days of professional development during the school year, but no more than five service days can be set aside for this purpose.

The DCDEE will offer professional development opportunities for Teachers, Teacher Assistants, and Administrators, to the extent feasible and that funds are available. Contractors, subcontractors – including Principals, Directors and classroom staff may be required to participate in targeted professional development specified by DCDEE based on identified program needs.

G. Compensation for Instructional Staff

Compensation includes all salary, wages, health and/or retirement benefits paid to eligible NC Pre-K teachers and teacher assistants working in public and nonpublic school NC Pre-K programs as defined in this Section.

Teacher Eligibility

1. Teachers who work in **public school** NC Pre-K programs will receive salaries based on the NC Public School Salary Schedule for Certified Staff and receive health and retirement benefits offered through the NC State Health Plan and NC State Retirement System.
2. Teachers who work in **nonpublic school** NC Pre-K programs and currently hold a NC Birth-Kindergarten (B-K), Preschool Add-On, Provisional B-K, Preschool Add-on, or Lateral Entry B-K license are eligible to receive a compensation package as defined in **Table 3**.
3. Teachers with a BA/BS degree in child development, early childhood or a related field (human development and family studies, or psychology), and at least a 2.5 GPA will be granted an **Initial Provisional Lateral Entry B-K License** and are also eligible to receive a compensation package as defined in **Table 3**.

Teacher Assistant Eligibility

1. Teacher assistants working in **public school** NC Pre-K programs will receive salaries based on the NC Public School Salary Schedule for Non-Certified Staff and receive health and retirement benefits offered through the NC State Health Plan and NC State Retirement System.

2. Teacher assistants who work in **nonpublic school** NC Pre-K programs and exceed NC Pre-K education requirements (currently hold AA/AAS in ECE) are eligible to receive a compensation package as defined in **Table 4**.

Compensation Packages for Nonpublic School Programs

1. Compensation packages must be equivalent to at least the **minimum compensation level** for eligible teachers and teacher assistants, as defined in **Tables 3 and 4**. The package may consist of a, b, or c and equal to the package amount.
 - a. Salary **only**, or
 - b. Salary **plus** health **or** retirement plans, or
 - c. Salary **plus** health **and** retirement plans.
2. Local nonpublic school NC Pre-K programs are required to move eligible teachers and teacher assistants from the **minimum to the target compensation level**, based on available state and local fiscal resources.
3. Teachers with less than the required education and experience, and teacher assistants with less than an associate's degree in early childhood education, who work in nonpublic school NC Pre-K programs, should be compensated based on salary and benefit targets defined by the site administrator.

Guidance:

Programs providing NC Pre-K services should refer to state labor laws pursuant to the North Carolina Wage and Hour Act (<http://www.nclabor.com/wh/wh.htm>) and to federal and labor laws pursuant to the Fair Labor Standards Act (<http://www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-flsa.htm>) regarding questions about wage and hour rules and employment classifications (i.e., exempt versus nonexempt) of NC Pre-K instructional staff based on educational degrees and credentials.

Instructional staff, teacher and teacher assistant, shall work in direct contact with NC Pre-K children for at least 32.5 hours per week. Instructional staff should spend the remainder of the 40 hour work week on planning activities to support direct instruction expectations.

Contract Administrators are strongly encouraged to provide salaries to teachers and teacher assistants that are comparable to that of teachers in the local public school setting. The 2012/2013 public school employee salary schedules can be found at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/finance/salary/schedules/2012-13schedules.pdf>.

**Table 3. Compensation Packages for Eligible Teachers Working in Nonpublic School Programs
B-K Licensure, Pre-school Add-on Licensure, Provisional B-K Licensure, Initial Provisional Lateral Entry B-K License & BA/BS Degree**

Experience	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Minimum Compensation	\$26,260	\$26,680	\$27,120	\$28,680	\$30,080	\$31,420	\$32,710	\$33,750	\$34,230	\$34,720	\$35,220	\$35,710	\$36,220	\$36,730	\$37,260	\$37,800
Compensation Target	\$30,900	\$31,322	\$31,786	\$33,392	\$34,834	\$36,215	\$37,543	\$38,615	\$39,109	\$39,614	\$40,129	\$40,633	\$41,159	\$41,684	\$42,230	\$42,786

Notes

- Minimum and Maximum Compensation Target (Salary and Benefits) Packages** based on North Carolina Public School Salary Schedules for Certified Employees - Bachelor’s Degree Certified Teacher Salary **Schedule 5th Pay Period 2005-2006**. For Minimum Compensation Tables for more than 15 years of service, see: <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/finance/salary/schedules/2005-06schedulespayperiod5.pdf>
- Health benefit calculation based on 2005-2006 NC State Health Plan rate **\$321 per month** (12 months of employment).
- Retirement benefit calculation based on **3% of annual salary**.
- Compensation scale assumes a 40-hour work week for 36 weeks (10-month school year) (1,440 hours: includes 6 ½ hours direct child contact, plus related instructional planning, home visits, family conferences, professional development activities – See Section 6. b).
- Employer and employee state and federal taxes are not included in these figures.
- County supplements are determined by the Local NCPRE-K Committee.
- Initial Provisional Lateral Entry B-K License** – Granted to a teacher with a BA/BS degree in child development, early childhood or a related field (human development and family studies, or psychology), and at least a 2.5 GPA. Upon completion of B-K requirements teacher recommended for a B-K Standard Professional I or II license.
- Provisional B-K Licensure** – Granted to a teacher with another North Carolina license. Ex: Teacher with K-6 license approved for a provisional B-K or Preschool Add-on. Upon completion of B-K requirements teacher recommended for a B-K Standard Professional I or II license and/or Preschool Add-on License.
- Teaching Experience** – One year of full time (at least 30 hours/week) teaching experience in a public or nonpublic setting is given for each increment (step) on the state salary schedule. Experience is determined by the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI) at the time the license is issued. Teachers should be placed at the “0” level of experience until the DPI Licensure Section computes “years of experience,” which are denoted on the license document mailed to the teacher. Teacher’s salary would move to the appropriate step of **Table 3** upon receipt of license.

**Table 4. Compensation Packages for Teacher Assistants Working in Nonpublic School Programs
AA/AAS Degree in Early Childhood Education**

Experience	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Minimum Compensation	\$15,810	\$16,063	\$16,328	\$17,267	\$18,110	\$18,917	\$19,693	\$20,319	\$20,608	\$20,903	\$21,204	\$21,499	\$21,806	\$22,114	\$22,433	\$22,758
Compensation Target	\$20,136	\$20,397	\$20,670	\$21,637	\$22,505	\$23,337	\$24,136	\$24,781	\$25,078	\$25,382	\$25,692	\$25,996	\$26,312	\$26,629	\$26,958	\$27,293

Revised September 13, 2006 – Minimum Compensation and Compensation Target (based on a 10-month school year)

Notes

1. **Minimum and Maximum Compensation Target (Salary & Benefits) Packages** based on Fiscal Year **2005-2006** North Carolina Public Schools Salary Schedules - Curriculum Support Personnel Salary Grades for Teacher Assistants with at least AA/AAS degree.
2. Health benefit calculation based on **2005-2006** NC State Health Plan rate **\$321 per month** (12 months of employment).
3. Retirement benefit calculation based on 3% of annual salary.
4. Compensation scale assumes a 40-hour work week for 36 weeks (10-month school year). NC Pre-K teacher assistants work 37.5-40 hours a week for 36 weeks.
5. Employer and employee state and federal taxes are not included in these figures.
6. Teaching Experience – One year of full time teaching assistant experience (at least 30 hours/week) in a public or nonpublic setting is given for each step in **Table 4**.

Section 7: Evaluation and Monitoring

A. ECERS-R Assessments

Beginning July 2012, all NC Pre-K licensed programs in public schools and private child care facilities will now have an ECERS-R assessment as part of their regular rated license assessment every 3 years. This will be conducted at the time of the star rated license reassessment. At least one of the classrooms chosen for the star rated license assessment must be a NC Pre-K classroom.

NC Pre-K classrooms must score a **minimum of 5.0**. Classrooms that receive less than 5.0 will be contacted by the Division of Child Development and Early Education and are required to submit an Improvement Plan demonstrating how the minimum rating will be accomplished by the following year of operation. Classrooms have one year to improve quality to the 5.0 level.

Guidance:

Guide to the NC Pre-K ECERS-R Assessment Process:

1. The DCDEE Child Care Consultant will request the ECERS-R assessment from the NC Rated License Assessment Project (NCRLAP) as part of the rated license assessment.
2. At least one of the classrooms chosen for the ECERS-R assessment must be a NC Pre-K classroom. If a NC Pre-K classroom is not chosen as part of the random selection process, the NCRLAP assessor will return another day (within two weeks) to complete an ECERS-R assessment for at least one NC Pre-K classroom.
3. When all the ECERS-R assessments for the facility have been completed, the NCRLAP will email the Assessment Reports (AR) to the DCDEE Child Care Consultant.
4. The DCDEE Child Care Consultant will contact the facility Director/Administrator and the NC Pre-K Site Administrator (if different from the facility Director/Administrator) to schedule a visit to deliver and review the AR, including the NC Pre-K ECERS-R assessment.
5. After the visit, the DCDEE Child Care Consultant will email a copy of the NC Pre-K ECERS-R assessment report to the local Contract Administrator and program contact to share the AR, items discussed, recommendations, and technical assistance opportunities available related to the NC Pre-K ECERS-R assessment.

If the NC Pre-K classroom scores less than 5.0 on the ECERS-R assessment:

An Improvement Plan is required when the classroom ECERS-R score does not meet the minimum assessment score (5.0) on any classroom assessment.

- The classroom will have one year to make improvements.
- The DCDEE Child Care Consultant will contact the NC Pre-K local Contract Administrator and the NC Pre-K Site Administrator to set up a meeting to discuss the AR and to develop an Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan and timeline will be developed jointly with the DCDEE Child Care Consultant and Supervisor (if

necessary), the NC Pre-K local Contract Administrator, the NC Pre-K Site Administrator, Lead Teacher and Teacher Assistant, and (as needed) the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency or Smart Start Partnership.

- A copy of the final Improvement Plan must be maintained by the NC Pre-K local Contractor, NC Pre-K site, and the DCDEE Child Care Consultant.
- Follow-up assessments will be conducted to ensure the minimum rating is met during the following school year. The DCDEE Child Care Consultant will request the follow-up assessment from the NCRLAP.
- A classroom may be exempt from the Improvement Plan requirements if the classroom location or teacher has changed since the ECERS-R assessment occurred. However, the classroom may be subject to a new assessment.

B. Reported Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations

The NC Division of Child Development and Early Education will notify local Contract Administrators of an open abuse and neglect investigation occurring in a NC Pre-K site.

The NC Pre-K site in question may continue operating the NC Pre-K classroom until the investigation and resolution are complete. If the allegation of abuse and/or neglect is substantiated, NC Pre-K funds may be terminated where there is substantiation of abuse and neglect that jeopardize the health and safety of children enrolled in the program.

In some cases, NC Pre-K Program payments will continue through the appeals process. However, NC Pre-K funds will be terminated when the participating NC Pre-K site child care facility license has been suspended or revoked. Any substantiation of child abuse or neglect, or any administrative action resulting in a change of the license status, may impact future participation in the NC Pre-K program.

C. Program and Fiscal Monitoring of Local NC Pre-K Programs

The Division of Child Development and Early Education, local Contract Administrators, and Site Administrators are required to monitor for compliance with the NC Pre-K program, fiscal and contract requirements.

Monitoring by the Division of Child Development and Early Education

In addition to monitoring child care licensing requirements, DCDEE Child Care Consultants will monitor for compliance with specific NC Pre-K Program Requirements. Results of DCDEE monitoring will be sent to the Division of Child Development and Early Education.

Monitoring Tools

Monitoring tools developed by the Division of Child Development and Early Education must be used at the local level for self-review and verification of compliance with the operating requirements.

a. NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool (Site Tool), completed by the Site Administrator (or designee), is designed to provide checklists of those components of the program that must be reviewed for compliance annually at the site and classroom level. **The Site**

Monitoring Tool shall be submitted to the local contractor and maintained on file at the child care facility for review by the child care consultant in the Division of Child Development and Early Education assigned to monitor the NC Pre-K program.

b. NC Pre-K Contractor Monitoring Tool (Contractor Tool), completed by the local contractor (or designee), is designed to provide checklists of those components of the program (both programmatic and fiscal) that must be reviewed for compliance annually at the local contractor level. A copy of this tool will also be submitted to DCDEE. Note: This tool is being revised to include aspects related to financial assistance contracts.

Guidance:

The required Contractor and Site Monitoring Tools are organized by specific program or fiscal requirements. The tools list specific documentation required to support the cited requirement/standard, and tracking columns are included for self-monitoring. Supporting documentation, listed under the “source” column, must be available for review by the local contractor and by DCDEE personnel during monitoring. To download monitoring tools please go to: http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/general/mb_ncprek.asp

Note: The NC Pre-K Contractor Monitoring Tool is being revised to include aspects related to financial assistance contracts.

Site Administrator responsibilities:

1. Each site must monitor its own program and classrooms on a regular basis using the NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool (Site Tool).
2. The Site Administrator (or designee) monitors NC Pre-K sites/classroom(s) and completes the Site Tool.
3. When a particular standard or requirement has not been met, each site should establish a written plan (which may include exceptions from the state office) to meet compliance. The plan should define who is responsible for accomplishing the task, a timeline, and information to indicate progress toward meeting the requirement.
4. By October 31st of the program year, the Site Administrator completes, signs (Section F. Assurance Statement), dates an original copy of the completed Site Tool, attaches written action plans for items not met, and submits the materials to the local Contractor. NOTE: If a site or classroom becomes a NC Pre-K site or classroom after October 1, a Site Tool should be completed and submitted to the local Contractor within 90 days of the first attendance day at that site/classroom.
5. Information collected with this tool will be used by the local Contractor to confirm, record, and report local site compliance to the DCDEE using the NC Pre-K Contractor Monitoring Tool (Contractor Tool).
6. A copy of the Site Monitoring Tool should be available at each NC Pre-K site and shared with the DCDEE Child Care Consultant during the annual licensing compliance visit.

Local Contractor responsibilities:

1. Local contractors monitor sites/classrooms and complete the NC Pre-K Contractor Monitoring Tool (Contractor Tool).
2. When a particular standard or requirement has not been met, each Contractor should establish a written plan (which may include exceptions from the state office) to meet compliance. The plan should define who is responsible for accomplishing the task, a timeline, and information to indicate progress toward meeting the requirement. In addition, any non-compliance with fiscal requirements may result in corrective action, including reimbursement for unallowable expenditures.
3. The local Contractor (or designee) ensures that:
 - a. By October 31st of the program year an original copy of the Site Tool from each NC Pre-K site is on file. (See NOTE in item 4, above.)
 - b. Some information on the NC Pre-K Contractor Tool is completed using results from the Site Tool. Specific written action plans, timelines, exceptions from the state office, and information to indicate progress toward meeting a requirement for any site/classroom must be recorded and attached to the monitoring tool. In addition, the Contractor will follow up with the site/classroom on concerns, if any are identified by the DCDEE Child Care Consultant during the annual visits between November – May of the program year.
 - c. No later than January 31st of the program year, at least one annual site visit will be made to each NC Pre-K program site/classroom. During the visit, the Site Tool should be discussed and validated by the local Contractor (or designee). For sites/classrooms that have not met specific requirements, written plans, attached to the Site Tool, to meet compliance should be reviewed and monitored for completion. This may require additional classroom visits by the Contractor (or designee).
 - d. By Feb. 1st, the Contract Administrator must complete the Contractor Tool for all NC Pre-K sites to be reviewed and discussed with the DCDEE Administration Section staff. Any written action plans, timelines, exceptions from the state office, and other information to support progress toward requirements not met are on file and discussed.
 - e. The Contractor Tool will be made available to DCDEE personnel for review during a scheduled monitoring/compliance review. Such review will occur from February 1st through May 15th of the program year by site visit or desk review. DCDEE personnel will contact the local contractor (or designee) to set a specific date and time to review monitoring results. The Contractor Tool must be signed and mailed to DCDEE office prior to desktop review or on-site visit.
 - f. By May 31, the Contract Administrator must complete and mail Action Plans (timeline/who completes each task) for items that do not meet the Program Requirements and/or Fiscal Guidelines, sign, date, and mail to the DCDEE. **Any corrective actions for fiscal non-compliance must be completed within 90 days of notification by the state office.**

4. Results are reported to the local NC Pre-K Committee prior to **May 31st** of the program year. Information included in the tool should be considered in planning for the upcoming program year.

State level responsibilities:

Visits by DCDEE Child Care Consultants will be made to NC Pre-K classrooms during annual licensing visits to ensure standards and documentation are in place with the program and fiscal requirements, as well as to offer technical assistance to improve program quality. These visits will occur November – May of the program year. The Child Care Consultant will report information gathered from these visits to the local Contract Administrator.

Reporting and monitoring information may also be obtained through the NC Pre-K County Plan (NC Pre-KPlan) and the NC Pre-K Reporting System (NC Pre-KKids). These systems include extensive information about children, staff, and programs. Child information will include the necessary information required to support the State's Maintenance of Effort (MOE) for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

1. DCDEE personnel will schedule monitoring during February 1st through May 15th to review results, including action plans, collected and documented on the Contractor and Site Tools by the county/region contractor.
2. DCDEE personnel will:
 - a. Validate that all requirements have either been met or plans for achieving compliance are in place. Validation is a process that requires comparing results reported on the monitoring tools (“Yes, No, N/A, Plan”) with the evidence to support the “Yes, No, N/A, Plan” selections. Validation occurs when there is agreement between what the local contractor (or designee) reports and what the monitor (state program personnel) reviews. If specific program or fiscal requirements have not been met, plans and a timeline for meeting compliance will be discussed. If specific fiscal requirements have not been met, any corrective action must be completed within 90 days of notification by the state office.
 - b. Confirm that the Contractor (or designee) will submit final programmatic monitoring results, summarized on the Contractor Tool with supporting plans for items not met, to the state office by May 31st. This may require additional follow-up (Email communication, telephone calls, technical assistance visits) by DCDEE personnel to provide support in areas not fully implemented.
 - c. By June 15th, DCDEE personnel reviews, signs, dates Section G (State Office Validation), and returns a copy of the Contractor Tool to the local Contractor (or designee) along with any plans for meeting the program and fiscal requirements. If specific fiscal requirements have not been met, any corrective actions must be completed within 90 days of notification by the state office.
4. An original copy of the tool will be maintained by the state office as evidence of program requirements compliance.

D. Monitoring Timeline

When	What	Who
By October 31	An original copy of the Site Tool is completed, and plans for items that require an Action Plan must be submitted to the Local Contract Administrator and the Child Care Consultant at the Division of Child Development and Early Education. (Site or classroom new after October 1 should complete and submit within 90 days of the first attendance day.)	Site administrator or designee (site director or public school principal) *All child developmental screenings may not be completed by October 31 and should be noted in the Action Plan.
November – January 31 November – May	Complete the Contractor Tool , including Action Plans and Timelines, as applicable. Local Contract Administrators conduct site visits to review and discuss Site Tool and results. Schedule follow-up visits as need DCDEE Child Care Consultants conduct site visits to NC Pre-K programs to review Site Tool and monitor for compliance with child care requirements.	Local Contract Administrator (or designee) Local Contract Administrator (or designee) DCDEE Personnel
By February 1	Local Contract Administrators complete Contractor Tool for all NC Pre-K sites to be reviewed and discussed with DCDEE Administration Section staff.	Local Contract Administrator (or designee)
February 1 – May 15	DCDEE Administration Section staff review Contractor Tool results with local Contract Administrators by desk audits and/or visits to the local Contract Administrator.	DCDEE Personnel
By May 31	Action Plans (timeline/who completes each task) for items that do not meet the Program Requirements, sign, date, and mail to the Division of Child Development and Early Education office. Corrective Actions for items that do not meet the Fiscal Requirements must be completed within 90 days of notification by the state office.	Local Contract Administrator (or designee)
By June 15	Mail copy of Contractor Tool, with any comments from DCDEE , to the local Contractor. (Original copy filed in the state office.) Monitoring results reported to the Local NC Pre-K Committee.	DCDEE Personnel Local Contractor

E. Monitoring Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds services and assistance to income-eligible families who have a child living in the home. The TANF block grant, administered by the State Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), has an annual cost sharing requirement, referred to as the Maintenance of Effort requirement (MOE). Every federal fiscal year, each state must spend a certain amount of its own money to help eligible families in ways that are consistent with the purpose of the TANF program.

The NC Pre-K Program, designed to provide high-quality pre-kindergarten experiences that may allow parents to work, may count as MOE. (See *NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contract Manual*).

Local NC Pre-K programs are subject to monitoring visits by the DHHS Division of Budget and Analysis. The Division of Budget and Analysis, in conjunction with the State NC Pre-K Program, will select administrative programs for monitoring visits. Monitoring visits are not audits, but reviews of randomly selected child records, to ensure that funds to be counted as MOE meet the basic guidelines as outlined in the *NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contract Manual*.

Local NC Pre-K programs should inform eligible NC Pre-K families, at the time of their enrollment into the program, that they should update the program if any of the following information changes during the NC Pre-K program year. Families should be informed that NC Pre-K services would continue for their child and would not be affected by the information update/change.

1. Name changes
2. Child's living arrangement changes related to who has legal custody and/or guardianship of the child