

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

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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 and the [North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development](#). 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 the [NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development standards](#) are:

- Approaches to play and 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 (policy) 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, contract and site administrators 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
- Pre-Kindergarten Curricula, August 2010
- Assessment of Children in Pre-Kindergarten, August 2010

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 is governed by the NC Child Care Rules, the NC Open Meetings Law, the NC Public Records Law, the NC State Board of Education Policy ([Educator Licensure and](#)

[Teacher Evaluation](#)), the *NC Pre-K Program Requirements & Guidance*, *NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development*, and the *NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contracts Manual*. These *documents* may be downloaded from the Division of Child Development and Early Education website: http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/general/mb_ncprek.asp/.

NC Pre-K programs must comply with the NC Child Care Rules ([click here](#)), which includes Section .3000, NC Pre-Kindergarten Services ([click here](#)). NC Child Care Rule .3000 is referenced throughout this document when a rule applies to a specific policy requirement. Not all requirements are in the NC Child Care Rules. Look for the following format following specific requirements that are now in the NC Child Care Rules.

Example

See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3003 Program Attendance Policy](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012

No exceptions will be issued for any Rule. Other requests related to policy requirements must be submitted in writing by the NC Pre-K local contract administrator 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
919-527-6500– Phone / 1-800-859-0829

<http://ncchildcare.nc.gov>

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 these *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-K Plan, 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, including the adoption of a **Conflict of Interest Policy (e.g., See Section 2-8 Conflict of Interest Statement – Sub-Committee)**. 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 and Responsibilities

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.

Guidance

Abuse and Neglect Investigations

The Division of Child Development and Early Education will notify local Contract Administrators of an open abuse or neglect investigation occurring in an 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 by the local NC Pre-K committee where there is substantiation of abuse or neglect that jeopardizes 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.

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.

Guidance

The Committee has the option to discuss and vote to allow the Contractor to move children across sites without Co-Chair signatures. The Co-Chairs and the Committee would agree that this decision-making authority is officially transferred to the Contractor. The decision should then be reflected in the meeting minutes for the NC Pre-K Committee meeting.

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.

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/>.

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).

F. NC Pre-K Standardized Site Selection Process

Purpose and Use of the NC Pre-K Site Selection Rubric

1. SFY 2012 and 2013 Legislation required the Division of Child Development and Early Education to establish a standard decision making process to be used by local NC Pre K committees in awarding prekindergarten classroom slots and student selection.
2. The NC Pre-K Site Selection Rubric (Rubric) is designed to be used by the NC Pre-K Site Selection Sub-Committee as a comparative tool to help standardize the site selection process in each county or region across the state. These standards and indicators are designed to guide the Site Selection Sub-Committee's decisions in selecting sites for participation in the NC Pre-K program.
3. The Site Selection Sub-Committee is required to complete a Rubric for each site applicant, using information from the **NC Pre-K Site Application** completed by potential NC Pre-K Site applicants. The Rubric is divided into five sections with points assigned to four of the sections. The fifth section, **Additional Locally Determined Indicators**, is to be used by each Site Selection Sub-Committee to list other indicators and assign up to eight (8) points. There are 100 possible points, including the eight (8) points for Additional Locally Determined Indicators. All sites within a county must be compared using the same **Additional Locally Determined Indicators** to ensure fairness across the site selection process.
4. Once a NC Pre-K Site Selection Rubric has been completed for each potential NC Pre-K Site applicant, the Site Selection Sub-Committee will use the **NC Pre-K Site Selection Process Decision Tree** for next steps.

Guidance

Site Selection materials and instructions may be downloaded from the DCDEE website under the NC Pre-K Tab ([click here](#)). These include: Frequently Asked Questions, Instructions for Using the Rubric, NC Pre-K Site Selection Sub-Committee Conflict of Interest Statement, NC Pre-K Site Rubric and the NC Pre-K Site Application form.

**NC Pre-Kindergarten Program
Local NC Pre-K Advisory Committee
Non-Conflicted Site Selection Sub-Committee
Conflict of Interest Statement**

Local NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) Programs are expected to offer families a variety of settings to choose from in order to provide a high quality pre-kindergarten experience that will meet the needs of each individual child. The goal of using a non-conflicted NC Pre-K Site Selection Sub-Committee is that a diverse group of stakeholders will recommend sites as acceptable for NC Pre-K placements and advise the local NC Pre-K Committee as they work to fulfill contractual site selection obligations. The slate of choices that are recommended by the Site Selection Sub-Committee should reflect geographic and demographic diversity provided in public and private early education settings. The final selection of sites is determined by the local NC Pre-K Committee.

The items listed below are for consideration as NC Pre-K Committees make decisions about appropriate membership on the local Site Selection Sub-Committee. The local Site Selection Sub-Committee must consist of 3 or more members and may be a “Non-Conflicted” subset of your current NC Pre-K Committee. This information may help Committees to determine when potential members may or may not have a conflict of interest. It is important to avoid any conflict of interest as well as a perception of conflict of interest. If the NC Pre-K Contract Administrator is a private non-profit agency, a Conflict of Interest policy has already been submitted to the Division of Child Development and Early Education as part of their contract. It may be helpful to reference this policy as the Site Selection Sub-Committee considers how to address potential conflicts of interest. Please consider the following best practices:

1. There should be members of the Sub-Committee that represent various stakeholders in the community as well as subject matter experts in the field of child development and early education. Members may include representatives from the local Health Department, Child Care Resource & Referral Agency, County Department of Social Services, Community College and/or other community volunteers. Members may *not* include current or applying providers (public or private) or their representatives.
2. It is the duty of every Site Selection Sub-Committee member to disclose and avoid both conflicts of interest and appearances of conflict of interest.
3. Individuals who may benefit directly or indirectly from decisions made by the Site Selection Sub-Committee may participate in discussions and offer input but should abstain from voting when the site involved is under consideration.
4. Members should not solicit or accept gifts, entertainment, favors, or other items of more than nominal monetary value from anyone representing an NC Pre-K program site or site applicant. Current NC Pre-K contract templates specify this prohibition from offering or accepting gifts.
5. Members should not use their position on the Sub-Committee, the NC Pre-K program name, or any property belonging to the NC Pre-K program for private profit or benefit.
6. Meetings may begin with the following question: Does any Sub-Committee member have any known conflict of interest or appearance of conflict with respect to any matters coming before the Sub-Committee today? If so, please identify the conflict or appearance of conflict and refrain from any undue participation in the particular matter involved.

I have reviewed the Conflict of Interest Statement above and I agree to adhere to all of the items listed.

NC Pre-K Site Selection Sub-Committee Member

Date

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. Responsibility for determining eligibility can be delegated to sub-contractor, however the local contractor is ultimately responsible for insuring that eligibility determinations by sub-contractors are accurate and in accordance with NC Pre-K Eligibility Guidelines. This responsibility, along with other administrative duties, determined that NC Pre-K contracts issued by DCDEE are Financial Assistance contracts. 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 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, or in an existing Individualized Education Plan (IEP);
- 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 B. **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 in writing 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 August 12, 2013)

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? _____

Is either 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 (Go to question 4.)
 ___ Yes (Child is eligible; complete Tables A and B.)
- 4) **Does the child have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?**
 ___ No (Complete Tables A and B and move to question 5.)
 ___ Yes (Child is at risk; complete Tables A and B and move to question 5.)

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, and/or IEP	<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"/>

- 5) (Please complete this question if you have answered question 4.)

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	\$26,124
2	\$34,162
3	\$42,201
4	\$50,239
5	\$58,277
6	\$66,315
7	\$67,822
8	\$69,329
9	\$70,837
10	\$72,344
11	\$73,851
12	\$75,358

*Based on **August 1, 2013** 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*

NC Pre-K 2014-15

Family Size	Federal Poverty	130%	150%	185%	200%	250%	300%
1	\$11,670	\$15,171	\$17,505	\$21,590	\$23,340	\$29,175	\$35,010
2	\$15,730	\$20,449	\$23,595	\$29,101	\$31,460	\$39,323	\$47,190
3	\$19,790	\$25,727	\$29,685	\$36,612	\$39,580	\$49,475	\$59,370
4	\$23,850	\$31,005	\$35,775	\$44,123	\$47,700	\$59,625	\$71,550
5	\$27,910	\$36,283	\$41,865	\$51,634	\$55,820	\$69,775	\$83,730
6	\$31,970	\$41,561	\$47,955	\$59,145	\$63,940	\$79,925	\$95,910
7	\$36,030	\$46,839	\$54,045	\$66,656	\$72,060	\$90,075	\$108,090
8	\$40,090	\$52,117	\$60,135	\$74,167	\$80,180	\$100,225	\$120,270
9	\$44,150	\$57,395	\$66,225	\$81,678	\$88,300	\$110,375	\$132,450
10	\$48,210	\$62,673	\$72,315	\$89,189	\$96,420	\$120,525	\$144,630
11	\$52,270	\$67,951	\$78,405	\$96,700	\$104,540	\$130,675	\$156,810
12	\$56,330	\$73,229	\$84,495	\$104,211	\$112,660	\$140,825	\$168,990

*Based on 2014 Federal Poverty Levels Revised July 1, 2014

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 family size and 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	Military Member's Leave & Earnings Statement
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 (documentation required). 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. 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). 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. 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>

* Guardians are only counted in the family unit, and their income is counted, only if both biological parents are deceased or their parental rights have been terminated by the court.

Income verification must take place using one of the following documents:

- Tax records
- Pay stubs
- Award letters from the Social Security Administration
- Award letters from the Employment Security Commission
- Employer statements
- Business records for self-employed individuals
- Signed statements when an individual claims to have no verifiable countable income

NOTE: For children in the custody of DSS, income of the Foster parents is not considered when determining eligibility. If the child has income such as Social Security death or disability benefits, that income would be counted. This is consistent with the Subsidized Child Care policy.

F. Children with Unique Needs

When a teacher, the family, 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 the family, 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

Programs serving NC Pre-K children shall maintain a four or five star rated license.

For new centers, a temporary license will be issued for six months with the expectation of the program achieving a 4- or 5- star license at the end of the temporary time period.

See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3002 Facility Requirements](#)

*History Note: Authority G.S. 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012*

Guidance

New Facility - If the program does not achieve at least a four star license at the end of the temporary time period then a Provisional License may be issued for any length of time up to, but not exceeding, 12 consecutive months, to allow a specific time period for the program to correct violations that do not cause conditions hazardous to the health and safety of the children in care. A Corrective Action Plan (CAP) must be included that describes what the facility operator must do to comply with requirements.

NC Pre-K Facility with Reduction in Star Rating - If a four- or five-star rated license center participating in the NC Pre-K programs drops below 4 stars for any reason, then a Provisional License may be issued for any length of time up to, but not exceeding, 12 consecutive months, to allow a specific time period for the program to correct violations that do not cause conditions hazardous to the health and safety of the children in care. A Corrective Action Plan (CAP) must be included that describes what the facility operator must do to comply with requirements.

If the operator is unable to move the facility back to a four- or five-star rated license by the end of the Provisional time period, the NC Pre-K Contract Administrative Agency in collaboration with the local NC Pre-K Committee may deny eligibility to participate in the NC Pre-K program.

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 10 months (36 weeks) of instructional days per school calendar year.

The 6.5 hour day refers only to the instructional portion of the day for children. Transportation is not a part of the 6.5 hour day. Time adjustments should be made in the

schedule for transportation time to ensure that children have a minimum of 6.5 hours of instructional time each day.

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 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 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 who is unable to come to school due to special circumstances (e.g. extended illness; hospitalization, and recovery).

Staff Professional Development:

Licensed Administrators, Teachers, and Teacher Assistants in nonpublic and public schools must participate in professional development consistent with the NC State Board of Education policy. This policy can be found on the Department of Public Instruction's website at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/licensure>.

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

Staff is required to work all the work days (up to 5) included in the school calendar. If additional teacher work days are offered the NC Pre-K requirements would not require that the NC Pre-K staff work those additional days.

Guidance

A Professional Development Day could be a day that the staff attends trainings/workshops relevant to their position as the NC Pre-K teacher. (In some counties the staff of private facilities have even attended the trainings set up for the NC Pre-K staff in DPI sites). These days could also be spent working in their classrooms preparing materials for their children.

C. Program Attendance Policy

Child attendance must be taken daily and submitted monthly for reimbursement. A child must attend a minimum of 50% of the site's operational days to be fully reimbursed. The NC Pre-K Plan and NC Pre-K Kids systems will calculate the attendance days and payment. During August and May, (or September and June) first and last month of the operating year a child must attend at least one day in order to be reimbursed. (Also applies to the first month of operation when classrooms are started during the school-year, due to expansion funds). In addition, the NC Pre-K Plan and NC Pre-K Kids systems will calculate a partial payment for a child who has attended between 25% and 50% of the attendance days in a month. This has been implemented to resolve attendance issues during months when the total number of attendance days may be reduced due to tracking out, holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Spring Break. *(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 more than three consecutive days, the Site-level Administrator must contact the family and determine the child's participation status. The site-level administrator must document attempts to contact the family and any specific decisions regarding the child's continued participation in the program. The site-level administrator must contact the local NC Pre-K contractor to share information related to the child's absence and to determine what further action may be necessary to maintain the child's attendance in the program.

Exceptions for an individual child's attendance can be requested for certain conditions such as illness, hospitalization, military leave, or crisis requiring family travel. These requests should be sent in writing to the NC Pre-K Contractor, who will determine whether the exception is approved. Contractors may require documentation for the circumstance regarding the need for the exception, such as documentation from a medical professional."

An education service that goes beyond a phone call must be provided to the child in these circumstances and may be a hospital visit, home visit, etc.

***See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3003 Program Attendance Policy](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012***

Guidance

Contractors and site Administrators should work with families to support a child's attendance and participation in NC Pre-K. 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 the Meal Patterns for Children in Child Care Programs from the 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 fee must be approved by the NC Pre-K Committee.

Child care requirements adopted by the NC Child Care Commission and effective on December 1, 2012 require that only unflavored skim or low fat milk be served to children two years old and older. Chocolate milk is not allowed. In addition, staff must role model appropriate eating behaviors by consuming only food or beverages that meet the USDA requirements in the presence of children. Changes to the nutrition standards were adopted and can be found in the NC Child Care Rule NCAC 09 .0901 General Nutrition Requirements.

New legislation was signed into law by the General Assembly in July, 2012. It applies to all licensed programs, including NC Pre-K programs. It allows parents or guardians to provide food and beverages to their children that may not meet the nutrition standards outlined in the Meal Patterns for Children in Child Care Programs from the USDA and allows parents and guardians to opt out of any supplemental food program provided by the program. When children bring their own food for meals or snacks to the program, if the food does not meet the nutritional USDA requirements, the program must provide additional food necessary to meet those requirements unless the child's parent or guardian opts out of the supplemental food provided by the program. A statement acknowledging the parental decision to opt out of the supplemental food provided by the program signed by the child's parent or guardian must be kept on file at the program. Opting out means that the center will not provide any food or drink so long as the child's parent or guardian provides all meals, snacks, and drinks scheduled to be served at the program's designated times. If the child's parent or guardian has opted out but does not provide all food and drink for the child, the program will provide supplemental food and drink as if the child's parent or guardian had not opted out of the supplemental food program.

Guidance

Sites should inform families about the importance of good nutrition for their children to encourage families to choose healthy food options for their children. Families and program staff can also be referred to the USDA Choose My Plate website for additional information and resources to support good nutrition (<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/ten-tips.html>) as well as the website for the NC Program "Eat Smart, Move More" (<http://www.nutritionnc.com/snp/kesmm.htm>).

See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .0901 General Nutrition Requirements](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-91(2); 143B-168.3;
Eff. January 1, 1986; Amended Eff. December 1, 2012; July 1, 2010; July 1, 1998; October 1, 1991; November 1, 1989.

E. Transportation

Contractors may choose to use some of the NC Pre-K administrative allocations for transportation services. They may also use funds from other sources such as Smart Start or private funding.

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's (teacher and teacher assistant) 40-hour-work week should not include before and/or after care services.

G. Religious Activities

- (a) During the Pre-K portion of the day, no subcontractor (service provider) may use its Pre-K funding to pay for any of the following:
 - (1) Religious worship, instruction or proselytization.
 - (2) Equipment or supplies to be used for any of the activities specified in paragraph (a) (1) of this section.

Guidance

Children may learn about other cultures, but there must not be any practicing of any religion. Learning about religion is considered social studies, while practicing religion is considered worship.

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 the assessment may be no more than 12 months old at the time of program entry. The health care 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

The site-level administrator must review all health assessment results and share the results with families.

*See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3005 Child Health Assessments](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012*

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 in accordance with NC Child Care Rule 10A NCAC 09 .3005 (a).

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 person 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.

Screening must 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. The site-level administrator must review all developmental screening results and share the results with families.

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)

*See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3006 Developmental Screening](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012*

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 programs must use the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*. Teaching staff must use these early learning standards to guide and inform their planning and facilitation of comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, high-quality prekindergarten learning experiences for children, and in their work with families. The *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development* may be found on the DCDEE's website at http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/providers/pv_foundations.asp.

Each NC Pre-K classroom staff shall use an approved curriculum that aligns with the *North Carolina Foundations of Early Learning and Development*. "Curriculum" means a curriculum that has been approved as set forth in the NC Child Care Rules by the NC Child Care Commission as comprehensive, evidence-based and with a reading component.

See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .0102 Definitions](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-88; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7 (a);
Eff. January 1, 2013

The following list represents a partial list of currently approved preschool curricula that aligns with the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development* standards.

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.)
13. *La Petite Academy Journey® on the Learning Care System™*
14. *Links to Literacy*, 2005
15. *HighScope Preschool Curriculum*, 2012

See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3007 Early Learning Standards and Curricula](#) History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a); Eff. January 1, 2013

D. Formative Assessments

Classroom staff are required to conduct formative assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development, as well as to inform instruction. All formative assessments used by the NC Pre-K program must be approved by the NC Child Care Commission based on the assessment tool's ability to collect information on children's behaviors, development, skills, knowledge, strengths, needs and interests across all domains of development.

The following assessment tools 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 Care System (for use with Tutor Time *LifeSmart™* and The Empowered Child™ Childtime)
5. Work Sampling System (Meisels)
6. Galileo Pre-K
7. The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment System
8. HighScope Child Observation Record, 2nd Edition
9. Investigator Club (Approved with the stipulation that this is used only with Investigator Club curriculum).
10. Teaching Strategies GOLD®
11. The Work Sampling System, 4th Edition

*See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3008 Formative Assessments](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7 (a), (b);
Eff. March 1, 2013*

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 at least 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-Class Size: School Age and Preschool at: <http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/policies/nc-policies-governing-services-for-children-with-disabilities/>.

*See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3009 Staff-to-Child Ratio and Class Size](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012*

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 the NC Pre-K State Office and your DCDEE Licensing Supervisor 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.

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.

Guidance

Preschool-aged children should be provided with a regular time, every day, 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, do quiet activities and/or participate in additional one-on-one interactions with instructional staff to address differentiated instructional goals. 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.

H. Indoor and Outdoor Learning Environments

Classrooms shall provide high-quality indoor and outdoor learning environments that support the implementation of *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*, 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) Allowing Pre-K program teachers the opportunity for 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) Allowing family members the opportunity for 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.

***See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3010 Family Engagement](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012***

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, 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 may 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.

See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3011 NC Pre-K Site-Level Administrator Qualifications](#) History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a); Eff. November 1, 2012

B. Teacher Education, Licensure and Credentials

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

Teachers working toward the required education and licensure shall hold a minimum of a BA/BS degree and 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 Add-on 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. (NOTE: related fields are Human Development and Family Studies, Psychology, Special Education, Human Growth and Development).

The site-level administrator must maintain documentation available for review by a Division representative of the progress toward the required standard.

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

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

When a qualified NC Pre-K teacher is not available, a new classroom may be opened with a qualified substitute for a maximum of 12 weeks, to allow additional time to secure a qualified teacher.

See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3012 NC Pre-K Teacher Education, Licensure and Credentials](#) History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a); Eff. November 1, 2012

Guidance

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 ([click here](#)).

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 ([click here](#)).

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 ([click here](#)).

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 the NC Department of Public Instruction Teacher Salary Schedule ([click here](#)).

C. Teacher Assistant Education and Credentials

All teacher assistants must have a high school diploma or GED and must 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. Teacher assistants employed by public schools may meet the employment requirements outlined by 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.

The site-level administrator shall maintain documentation available for review by the Division of the progress toward the required standard.

See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3013 NC Pre-K Teacher Assistant Education and Credentials](#) History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a); Eff. November 1, 2012

Guidance

It is not necessary for the Contract Administrator to keep documentation on file related to the teacher’s qualifications as long as they are monitoring that the individual NC Pre-K sites have the appropriate documentation. Teacher qualifications to meet specific licensure policy are maintained by the EESLPD Office. Teachers employed in nonpublic schools must enroll with the NC Pre-K EESLPD Office.

NC Pre-K Early Educator Support, Licensure and Professional Development (EESLPD) Office

The NC Pre-K Early Educator Support, Licensure and Professional Development (EESLPD) Office 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.nc.gov/general/mb_eeslpd.asp

NC Pre-K teachers who are employed by 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 by 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 8 units of credit (CEUs) or 80 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.**
- 3 renewal credits (3 CEUs or 30 contact hours) in Birth-through-Kindergarten content that aligns to Standard 5 of the NC Birth-through-Kindergarten Teacher Education Standards (http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/pdf_forms/NCPre-K_NC_BK_Speciality_Standards.pdf)
- 5 renewal credits (5 CEUs or 50 contact hours) in general Birth-through-Kindergarten content that aligns with the NC Birth-through-Kindergarten Teacher Education Standards (http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/pdf_forms/NCPre-K_NC_BK_Speciality_Standards.pdf) and supported by the teacher's Professional Development Plan.

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 Office 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 for **short-term vacancies** 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; or

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 requirements for **long-term vacancies** apply:

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.

*See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3014 NC Pre-K Substitute Staff](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012*

E. Instructional Staff Standards

Instructional staff (Teachers and 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, 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. All 40 hours for Pre-K teachers and assistants must be focused on the Pre-K classroom to which they are assigned.

*See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3015 Instructional Staff Standards](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012*

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.

*See also NC Child Care Rule [10A NCAC 09 .3016 Professional Development Requirements](#)
History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85; 110-88; S.L. 2011-145, s. 10.7(a);
Eff. November 1, 2012*

Guidance

NC Pre-K Teachers and Site Administrators who are employed by a nonpublic school are required to complete a series of mandated professional development prerequisite sessions that support the teacher licensure process upon enrollment with the Early Educator Support, Licensure and Professional Development (EESLPD) Office 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. Professional development for NC licensed educators is based on licensure type and level, per NC State Board of Education policy.

- 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 8 units of credit (CEUs) or 80 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.**
- 3 renewal credits (3 CEUs or 30 contact hours) in Birth-through-Kindergarten content that aligns to Standard 5 of the NC Birth-through-Kindergarten Teacher Education Standards (http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/pdf_forms/NCPre-K_NC_BK_Speciality_Standards.pdf)
- 5 renewal credits (5 CEUs or 50 contact hours) in general Birth-through-Kindergarten content that aligns with the NC Birth-through-Kindergarten Teacher Education Standards (http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/pdf_forms/NCPre-K_NC_BK_Speciality_Standards.pdf) and supported by the teacher's Professional Development Plan.

Up to five 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. Compensation may also include other benefits such as child care services discounts, disability insurance, educational scholarships, holiday pay, longevity pay, sick leave, vacation, other types of personal leave and/or other employer sponsored benefits (dental insurance, vision insurance).

Teacher Eligibility

1. Teachers who are employed by **public school** NC Pre-K programs will receive salaries based on the NC Public School Teacher Salary Schedule found at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/finance/salary> and receive health and retirement benefits offered through the NC State Health Plan and NC State Retirement System.
2. Teachers who are employed by **nonpublic school** NC Pre-K programs and currently hold a NC Birth-Kindergarten (B-K), Preschool Add-On, Provisional B-K, Preschool Add-on, Lateral Entry B-K license, or Initial Provisional Lateral Entry B-K License are eligible to receive a compensation package that aligns with the NC DPI Teacher Salary Schedule found at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/finance/salary>. Local site administrators are encouraged to offer competitive salaries and commensurate benefits to those offered by public schools.

Teacher Assistant Eligibility

1. Teacher assistants who are employed by **public school** NC Pre-K programs will receive salaries based on the NC Public School Salary Schedule for Non-Certified Staff at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/finance/salary/schedules/2014-15schedules.pdf> and receive health and retirement benefits offered through the NC State Health Plan and NC State Retirement System.
2. There are no specific salary recommendations for teacher assistants who are employed in **nonpublic school** NC Pre-K programs. However, to promote quality and continuity site administrators are encouraged to offer compensation commensurate with that of teacher assistants employed by public schools found in the State Salary Guide under the NC Department of Public Instruction's website at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/finance/salary/schedules/2014-15schedules.pdf>. Additional guidance is included in the highlighted subsection.

Compensation Packages for Nonpublic School Programs

1. Compensation packages may include salary only, or salary plus any of a variety of benefits. Examples of benefits in addition to salary/wages include:
 - Child Care discounts
 - Disability Insurance
 - Educational Scholarships
 - Health Insurance
 - Holiday Pay
 - Longevity Pay
 - Retirement Plans
 - Sick Leave
 - Vacation Pay
 - Other: Dental, Vision, or other employer determined benefits
2. Local NC Pre-K contract administrators should work with each local program administrator, as needed, to develop a written compensation plan that includes salary/wages and a list of potential benefits. There is no minimum or maximum compensation target that must be met; however, local nonpublic school NC Pre-K site administrators are encouraged to provide a compensation package for teachers and teacher assistants commensurate with compensation provided in local public school settings, based on available state and local fiscal resources.

Guidance

Salary Schedule Resources - NC Department of Public Instruction's Teacher and Teacher Assistant Salary Schedules may be found at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/finance/salary/>

From this page, select the 2014-15 Salary Schedules. Schedules are included for all public school positions (11 sections). The **Teacher Salary Schedules** are located in the first section of the manual. The **Teacher Assistant Pay Grade** is located under the *last* section of the manual titled **Non-Certified Salary Ranges** – subsection, **Curriculum Support**. Within this section are several pages of personnel classifications and one Pay Grade Chart. The **Teacher Assistant** position is listed in this chart, toward the bottom, at **Grade 59** with a corresponding minimum and maximum monthly salary range. There are other types of non-certified personnel positions listed in the same chart.

Best Practice - It is recommended that local NC Pre-K contract administrators contact the local public school's personnel or human resources office for salary schedules and any other information that would inform compensation discussions with local NC Pre-K site administrators, teachers and teacher assistants employed by nonpublic schools. Local programs are also encouraged to *consider* referring to **2012-2013 Public School Teacher and Teacher Assistant Salary Schedules** for prior years, which may be found at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/finance/salary/> to use as the minimum benchmark for compensating teachers and teacher assistants.

Labor Laws - 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.

Work Week - Compensation should be based on a 40-hour work week for 36 weeks (10-month school year) (1,440 hours: includes 6 ½ hours direct child contact. See Section 6. E. Instructional Staff Standards and 10A NCAC 09 .3015 Instructional Staff Standards).

How to convert an annual salary to an hourly wage:

- Add total number of paid days for the Pre-K year. This number would include actual NC Pre-K work days, usually 180, plus any paid holidays, vacation, teacher work days or professional development days, etc.
- Calculations are based on a 40 hour work week with 8 hour days. *Sample calculations:*

Hourly wage = Annual Salary ÷ Days ÷ 8

Hourly wage = \$33,000 ÷ 200 ÷ 8 = \$20.63/ hour (includes 20 paid holiday/vacation days)
 \$33,000 ÷ 180 ÷ 8 = \$22.92/ hour (includes 0 paid holiday/vacation days)
 \$40,000 ÷ 190 ÷ 8 = \$26.32/hour (includes 10 paid holiday/vacation days)
 \$40,000 ÷ 180 ÷ 8 = \$27.78/hour (includes 0 paid holiday/vacation days)

H. Payment Rates by Site Type

Head Start Programs and Head Start programs administered by a Public School sites - Maximum NC Pre-K Rate \$400 regardless of Lead and Substitute Lead qualifications.

Public Schools - Maximum NC Pre-K Rate \$473 regardless of Lead and Substitute Lead qualifications.

Private Programs

Lead teacher and Long Term Substitute Lead Teacher Groupings for Rates

Highest Degree	Teacher License	Grouping	Actual NC Pre-K Rate
BA/BS or higher	B-K License	BK or higher	\$650
BA/BS or higher	NC Lateral Entry BK License	BK or higher	\$650
BA/BS or higher	B-K Standard Prof II	BK or higher	\$650
BA/BS or higher	B-K Standard Prof I	BK or higher	\$650
BA/BS or higher	Provisional B-K License	BK or higher	\$650
BA/BS or higher	Provisional Pre-School Add-on	BK or higher	\$650
BA/BS or higher	Pre-School Add-on	BK or higher	\$650
BA/BS or higher	Other State Teacher's License	BK or higher	\$650
BA/BS or higher	Other NC Teacher's License	BK or higher	\$650

Highest Degree	Teacher License	Grouping	Actual NC Pre-K Rate
BA/BS or higher	Holds no License and is Working towards B-K License	Less than BK	\$600

Highest Degree	Teacher License	Grouping	NC Pre-K Rate
AA / AAS	NC Early Childhood Credential, Other, None, CDA or working towards B-K License/Preschool Add-On	Less than BA/BS and less than BK	\$550

DCDEE may grant exceptions to Contractors on a case by case basis for the above rates.

Any requests for exception to rate of reimbursement for a site or for a teacher should be sent to Cindy Wheeler, Early Education Unit (NC Pre-K/EESLPD Office) Manager, cindy.wheeler@dhhs.nc.gov. An 'exception' is defined as requesting a reimbursement payment for more than the approved caps: \$473 in public schools or \$400 per month in Head

Start, or paying a rate other than \$650/\$600 in private sites. A lower rate can be negotiated in public schools or Head Start programs without review by DCDEE.

Teachers should only be listed in the NC Pre-K Plan as having the BK License or other license if the NC Pre-K contract administrator has verified the actual license. Verification is defined as “having a copy of the license on file.” Licenses include a NC Lateral Entry BK, a NC Provisional BK or Preschool Add-on, a NC BK SP I, a NC BK SP II or another state’s license (which will qualify teacher for a Provisional BK Add-on license.

Payment should be made at the higher BK rate of \$650 per month if the license has been verified. If the effective date precedes the issue/received date, the reimbursement rate may be adjusted by submitting revised attendance sheets and summary sheets for the months in question and note on the summary the reason for the prior month adjustment via an FSR. Send this to the attention of Max Perry, NC Pre-K Budget. Similarly, the same process applies for a teacher with an expired license. The \$600 reimbursement rate is used until the license is reissued. If necessary follow the instructions above for reimbursement of the additional \$50 if the re-issue date is back dated.

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, which may include the NC Pre-K Early Educator Support, Licensure and Professional Development mentor and evaluator.

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 the Lead Teacher's NC Pre-K EESLPD mentor and or evaluator. Other resources, such as the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, Smart Start Partnership, Public School, or Head Start agency may also be included, as applicable.

- 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. The classroom must achieve at least a 5.0 on the follow-up assessment in order to continue to be approved as an NC pre-K site.
- 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

DCDEE Child Care Consultants will monitor for compliance with the NC Child Care Rules, which includes Section .3000, NC Pre-Kindergarten Services. Results of DCDEE facility licensing monitoring visits will be shared with the site-administrator, the local NC Pre-K Contractor and sent to the Division of Child Development and Early Education to be placed in the program's Master File. In addition, the NC Pre-K Program Requirements (Policy) that inform the work of the local contracting agency and the local NC Pre-K Committee, and requirements not in the NC Child Care Rules, will be monitored by NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultants and technical assistance provided, as needed, to ensure compliance.

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 NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant in the Division of Child Development and Early Education.**

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.

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.nc.gov/general/mb_ncprek.asp

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 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 compliance visits, as requested, and with the NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant, as requested, during meetings with the Contract Administrator.

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, 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 licensing visits to the program, and by the NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant to inform work with the Contract Administrator.
 - 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.

Guidance

Although Local Contractors are responsible for insuring that income eligibility is determined correctly, documentation may be stored at the individual sites as long as the contractor can obtain the eligibility documentation when DCDEE office staff requests it. It is important for the contractor to have verification on file that the contractor used in determining child eligibility.

State level responsibilities:

Visits by DCDEE Child Care Consultants will be made to NC Pre-K classrooms during annual licensing visits to ensure classrooms are in compliance with all NC Child Care Rules, including Rule .3000 NC Pre-Kindergarten Services. These visits may occur at any time during the program year. The Child Care Consultant will report information gathered from these visits to the local Contract Administrator.

NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultants will monitor policy requirements as defined in the NC Pre-K Program Requirements and ensure that documentation is on file to support program, contract, and fiscal requirements. Pre-K Program Policy Consultants will provide technical assistance and training to local Pre-K Contract Administrative agencies and committees, based on visit results. In addition, the NC Pre-K staff office teacher mentoring and evaluation staff will follow NC State Board of Education Licensure Policy and Procedures to carry out the provisions of teacher evaluation.

Reporting and monitoring information may also be obtained through the NC Pre-K County Plan (NC Pre-K Plan), the NC Pre-K Reporting System (NC Pre-K Kids) and NC Pre-K APP (Application, Prioritization and Placement), and the NC Educator Effectiveness System (teacher evaluation). 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 Admin 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 Admin 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
<p>November 15</p>	<p>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. A copy of the Site Tool should be maintained on file at the program for a DCDEE NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant to review as needed.</p> <p>(Site or classroom new after October 1 should complete and submit within 90 days of the first attendance day.)</p>	<p>Site administrator or designee (site director or public school principal)</p> <p>*All child developmental screenings not completed by October 31 should be noted in the Action Plan.</p>
<p>November – January 31</p> <p>September – May</p>	<p>Complete the Contractor Tool, including Action Plans and Timelines, as applicable.</p> <p>Local Contract Administrators conduct site visits to review and discuss Site Tool and results. Schedule follow-up visits as needed</p> <p>DCDEE Child Care Consultants conduct compliance visits to NC Pre-K programs using the NC Child Care Rules, including Rule .3000. DCDEE NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultants monitor local NC Pre-K contracting agencies and committees using the NC Pre-K Program Requirements and Fiscal Manuals.</p>	<p>Local Contract Administrator (or designee)</p> <p>Local Contract Administrator (or designee)</p> <p>DCDEE Personnel (Regulatory and NC Pre-K Sections)</p>
<p>By February 15</p>	<p>Local Contract Administrators complete Contractor Tool for all NC Pre-K sites to be reviewed and discussed with DCDEE Administration Section staff. The original Contractor Tool with the signed assurance statement must be mailed to DCDEE to the attention of the attention of the DCDEE Lead Monitoring Coordinator, Administrative Section, no later than February 15.</p>	<p>Local Contract Administrator (or designee)</p>
<p>February 15 – May 15</p>	<p>DCDEE Administration Section staff review Contractor Tool results with local Contract Administrators by desk audits and/or visits to the local Contract Administrator.</p>	<p>DCDEE Personnel (Regulatory and NC Pre-K Sections)</p>
<p>By June 15</p>	<p>Mail copy of Contractor Tool, with any comments from DCDEE, to the local Contractor. (Original copy filed in the state office.)</p> <p>Monitoring results reported to the Local NC Pre-K Committee.</p>	<p>DCDEE Personnel</p> <p>Local Contractor</p>

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