



THE
CHILDREN'S
TRUST



a\$cend

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Thrive by 5 A\$CEND Handbook

A\$CEND is a salary supplement award program for early childhood educators employed at participating Thrive by 5 programs. A\$CEND awards are intended to increase retention, educator practice and compensation. The A\$CEND program rewards early childhood educators by collectively recognizing education, ongoing professional development, teacher-child interactions and longevity as demonstrated pathways of competency in their roles. A\$CEND is funded and administered by The Children's Trust with career advising support from the Children's Forum.

Thrive by 5 Early Learning Quality Improvement System

The Thrive by 5 Early Learning Quality Improvement System (QIS) promotes children's school readiness through a continuum of support for early learning programs, educators and the children they serve. Thrive by 5 QIS is a voluntary program grounded in principles of equity that aim to drive access to higher quality services for children living in low-income/high-poverty neighborhoods throughout Miami-Dade County. Thrive by 5 emphasizes the achievement of child outcomes through effective teacher-child interactions.

Additional information regarding the *Thrive by 5 Quality Improvement System* can be found at <https://www.thechildrenstrust.org/content/thrive-5-0>

ElevatEd

ElevatEd is an online learning platform and professional workforce registry dedicated to empowering early learning educators. ElevatEd supports professional growth with a variety of services, including expert-led courses, scholarships, financial awards, and career pathway options. The A\$CEND salary supplement program relies on information contained in ElevatEd when determining eligibility. Active ElevatEd membership is a requirement for access to the A\$CEND award program. ElevatEd is a data system that maintains information on its members documenting their professional development in the field of early childhood education, including credentials, college coursework, continuing education units (CEUs), employment history and wage information. Once an educator becomes a ElevatEd member, they are **required** to update their record with any changes to their name, address, phone number, email address, employment information and professional development activities (transcripts, credentials, certificates, e.g..).

It is the educator's responsibility to update and maintain their ElevatEd profile. The educator's ElevatEd membership will be used to approve the salary supplement award by calculating training/knowledge and employment longevity levels. The award will be based on information in the system at the time the application is submitted.

To become a member of the ElevatEd or learn how to update your personal and professional development information, visit the ElevatEd website at <https://elevat-ed.miami/>

If you have additional questions for the ElevatEd team or about the information contained in your Career Journey, contact support@welsfoundation.org or call 786-735-0200

General Information About the A\$CEND Program

- A\$CEND awards are available for educators working in early learning programs participating in the Thrive by 5 Early Learning Quality Improvement System.
- A\$CEND applications must be submitted either online at <https://ascend.miamithriveby5qis.com/> or via the A\$CEND mobile application via Apple Store or Android. For more detailed information about the process, please refer to the A\$CEND application instruction guide.
- A\$CEND applications must be completed by the educator to ensure all information is correct (w-9, ACH, education, CLASS scores).
- Applicant must meet all eligibility requirements at the time the application is submitted.
 - It is the educator's responsibility to ensure that their ElevatEd Career Journey is current and that all eligible award criteria have been verified and are visible on the Career Journey prior to applying for an award.
- All supporting documentation including but not limited to W-9, bank account information and recent pay stubs are uploaded through the mobile application or website.
- A\$CEND awards are paid directly to the early childhood educator within 90 days (pending each step within application is submitted correctly).
- Once an award is approved, a practitioner must wait at least six months to apply for a new award (The eligible time period is considered six months from the previous approval date.)
- All award payments will come directly from The Children's Trust via ACH payment only (direct deposit). Educators will need to enroll in ACH payment in order to become eligible to receive payment.
- If the same course/training appears more than once in a practitioner's ElevatEd Career Journey, the duplicate training will not count toward an award.
- For any training or class not taken in a formal college/university setting, a certificate of attendance or completion will be accepted if it includes the person's name, the name of the training, the date of the training, the amount of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and the issuing organization name.
- Trainings must be International Accreditor's for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) approved and be a minimum of two hours.
- Awards are subject to change, are based on availability of funding and are issued in the order in which they are received.
- The Children's Trust reserves the right to deny any A\$CEND award.

**Please be advised that awards that are paid directly to an educator are reported to the Internal Revenue Services, under the Internal Revenue Code, if the total amount of the award exceeds \$599.00. A 1099 Form will be issued to you, a copy of which also will be sent to the Internal Revenue Service. Please consult with your tax advisor regarding how you report this income on your tax return.*

A\$CEND Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility for the A\$CEND Program is based on the following:

1. Educator must be an active member of ElevatEd and all Career Journey documentation, including transcripts, must be up to date.
 - *Before submitting your application, you must verify that your full name, address, work hours and employment location are correct and current in the PDR. If not, your application will be incomplete and cannot be processed.*
 - *All eligibility requirements are verified by information contained in the educator's ElevatEd Career Journey.*
2. Educator must be employed at a Thrive by 5 early learning program in Miami-Dade County. Employment must be for at least six months at the time of application submission.
 - **Educators that participated in the INCENTIVES\$ program and received an award between April 2022 -September 2022 but were not employed in a Thrive by 5 early learning program, were eligible for the A\$CEND program within the first contract cycle, October 2022-September 2023. Funding for this eligibility criteria has been exhausted and this option is no longer available.**
3. Educator must work with children ages birth-5 years, in an instructional capacity, for at least 20 hours per week during the previous six months.

Eligible Positions:

Director, Assistant Director, Curriculum Specialist, Lead Teacher, Associate Teacher, Floater, Family Child Care Home Provider, Large Family Child Care Home Employee

Ineligible Positions:

Non-Instructional Staff, Child Care Center and Family Child Care Home substitute educators, and all employees working less than 20 hours per week

Educators who are listed as working full-time in other Trust sponsored programs.

4. Educator must earn between minimum wage and \$17.50 per hour as an early childhood professional.
5. Educator must have successfully completed one of the options of the Knowledge and Training Pathway (see Appendix A).
 - Educator must maintain the minimum educational requirement every two years to continue to receive an award amount in this section.

If the application status was placed in the “does not qualify” category, the educator will have the option to reapply after six months. Additional documentation may be required for educators falling under this category. To request a review of the status, please see the Process for Inquiries below.

General Rules for the A\$CEND Program

A\$CEND awards are granted based on a combination of coursework/training, CLASS observation composite scores and years working within the Early Childhood field as outlined in the A\$CEND Knowledge, Training and Practice Scale (Scale) (see Appendix A). The comprehensive pathway provides a variety of award options based on the type of professional development completed, including Continuous Education Units (CEUs) and/or College Credit Coursework. All coursework/training and CEUs must be documented in the educator’s ElevatEd Career Journey. Educators may be eligible for one or more components of the Scale at each award point.

Note: In determining an award amount, if an educator meets the criteria of more than one level within the Knowledge/Training component of the A\$CEND pathway scale, the level chosen will be based on the higher monetary amount.

A\$CEND Comprehensive Pathway

Knowledge and Training Components

Continuous Education Units

A Continuous Education Unit (CEU) is a nationally recognized unit of measurement for participation in non-credit continuing education programs. CEUs may also be obtained as a measure used in continuing education programs to assist professionals to maintain their license within their profession. In accordance with the International Accreditors for Education and Training (IACET), one CEU equals 10 contact hours of learner interaction with the content of the learning activity which includes classroom, self-paced instruction, pre/post assignments and/or homework in support of a learning outcome. Contact implies connection is two-way, that is the instructor or learning source must monitor the learner’s progress and/or provide some form of feedback to the learner. This definition applies for face-to-face interaction as well as distance learning programs. CEUs are not awarded for learning activities in which individuals are engaged in unplanned, unsupervised or non-sponsored learning.

For the A\$CEND program, CEUs can be acquired through a(n):

- IACET approved institute
- Regionally accredited institution of higher education
- Children’s Trust Thrive by 5 implementation partner(s)

CEUs accepted for an A\$CEND award must demonstrate building competencies within at least one of the following areas:

- Child development and learning in context
- Family-teacher partnerships and community connections
- Child observation, documentation and assessment
- Developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate teaching practices
- Knowledge, application and integration of content in Early Childhood curriculum
- Professionalism as an early childhood educator

Additional conditions accepted for CEUs:

- English language courses (for purposes of demonstrating English language proficiency)
- VPK trainings required by the Department of Children and Families
- CEUs acquired to maintain active CDA, FCCPC or Florida Directors Credentials

CEUs will be calculated on trainings completed during the time period of January 1, 2018 - present. If the same CEU appears more than once in a practitioner's Registry Record, the duplicate training will not count toward an award.

Trainings completed that are not designated as meeting the criteria identified above for CEUs may be documented in the ElevatEd Career Journey, however, they will not be counted for the A\$CEND award.

College Credit Coursework

Early Childhood (EC)/Child Development (CD) college credits and degrees must be obtained from regionally accredited* colleges and universities. In addition to this, the following are also considerations for EC/CD Coursework:

- College Credit courses from regionally accredited colleges and universities that focus on the early stages of child growth and development from birth to age 5 years. ElevatEd will determine which courses can be categorized as EC or CD.
- Total credits: EC or CD, or a combination of both, will be accepted. If the same course/ training appears more than once in a practitioner's ElevatEd Career Journey, the duplicate training will not count toward an award.
- Degrees and credits earned from a non-regionally accredited college or university will not count toward an A\$CEND award. Such degrees will be recorded in the Registry Record as non-regionally accredited.
- Foreign college credits must be translated and evaluated by an agency accredited by the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) prior to application for A\$CEND (Thrive by 5 Educator Scholarships may be available to cover the costs associated with such translation, please review application options in the ElevatEd portal).

**Accreditation must be from one of the following: Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges Technical and Career Institutions, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Western Association of Schools, and Colleges.*

Hybrid of CEUs and College Credits

The hybrid option is a combination of CEU training and College Credit Coursework. Participants of the A\$CEND program will fall on the knowledge/training component of the scale at the highest level in which the combination of their CEU and College Credit acquisition permits.

Ongoing Educational Requirements

To retain an active status within the knowledge/training component of the scale, an A\$CEND Participant must earn a minimum of 3 CEUs every 2 years. The two year timeframe is calculated by the original application submission date into the A\$CEND program. This requirement remains across all knowledge/training levels and for participants utilizing a hybrid pathway.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is an observation instrument that assesses the quality of teacher-child interactions in the classroom. Three developmentally aligned versions of the CLASS are accepted for the A\$CEND Award which includes the Infant CLASS, Toddler CLASS, and Pre-K CLASS each with their own structured domains and dimensions. Scores used will be based on the most recent CLASS assessment as of 2018 to present. CLASS composite scores are calculated based on the average of the domain levels for the respective CLASS observation performed for an individual educator. The minimum qualification point for an incentive is a CLASS composite score of 4.00 with the maximum being a 7.00 (see Appendix A).

Should the educator not have had a formal CLASS observation since 2018, it may be requested via the A\$CEND application. CLASS observations are conducted by reliable observers from the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe. CLASS observations will be conducted and reported back to the educator within 90 days of the request. Once the CLASS score is received by the A\$CEND program, the educator should complete their application and submit for review. CLASS observation scores will be valid until the educator has a more recent formal observation or two years, whichever comes first. Should the educator not wish to wait for the CLASS observation for the current award period, they may request the observation and submit their application. The observation would be considered for payment in the subsequent award.

If the educator had an assessment previously and the score is missing from the application, the educator must request an assessment. This does not mean that another assessment will occur. Once the assessment has been requested in the application, the assessment team will contact the educator to identify if they have had an assessment in the past and/or schedule an assessment. The educator should not submit the application until the CLASS score is reflected.

Once the CLASS observation is requested, the educator and Program Director will receive an email from the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe (ELC). It is imperative that the educator alerts the Program Director that they have requested a CLASS observation for A\$CEND. The ELC staff will then call the Director to provide a two-week window in which the observation will take place. During this call information about the classroom will be provided to the ELC.

Please contact classinfo@elcmdm.org should anything change during the two-week observation window.

Assessors will arrive at the early learning site around 8:30am, any day during the two-week window period except for the three “no assess days.” The assessor will review the name of the classroom, teacher, and ages of the children with the Director. The assessor will not interact with the teacher during the observation, however before the observation commences, the assessor will verify the classroom schedule and confirm outdoor free play time.

During the observation, the assessor will observe four cycles per classroom.

- Infant/Toddler: 25-minute per cycle consisting of 15 minutes of observation and 10 minutes of coding
- Pre-k: 30-minute per cycle consisting of 20 minutes of observation and 10 minutes of coding

Once the observation is complete, the assessor will let the Director know and will leave the site. The assessor is not allowed to provide any information to the educator or Director regarding the quality of the observation. Should the educator or Director have any questions they may email classinfo@elcmdm.org.

Should the assessor visit the program during the two-week window and is unable to complete the observation, the educator will receive a second opportunity. The same process will be followed as detailed above. If the second observation is also unable to be completed, the educator will forfeit their opportunity for a CLASS observation for a period of 12 months.

Longevity*

This component of the Knowledge, Training and Practice scale is determined by the number of years a participant in the A\$CEND program has worked within the Early Childhood field. This will be calculated by what has been validated in the ElevatEd Early Childhood Career Journey. The lowest qualification point for an incentive is 3 years to the highest qualification point of 10 years or more in the Early Childhood field (see Appendix A).

**The Children's Trust confirms years of longevity through previously verified employment in the Thrive by 5 Professional Development Registry, as well as, new employment verified in ElevatEd. A verified employment record is employment that has been reviewed and verified in the ElevatEd platform by an approved administrator at your program.*

Process for Inquiries

The A\$CEND program provides the following process to address inquiries regarding policies and procedures of the program. Inquiries must be submitted within the current contract cycle which runs October to September.

The A\$CEND program encourages educators to seek resolution to their concerns. As such, the A\$CEND program staff is available to discuss inquiries and review all pertinent documentation to work toward answering any questions. Response to applicants will be within 10 business days of receipt of inquiry.

Inquires are only accepted via email at Thriveby5@thechildrenstrust.org

The subject line should read: A\$CEND Inquiry

Submit the inquiry request in writing via email to the A\$CEND program. The request must include details of the concern and supporting documentation. If the inquiry is a request to review eligibility criteria, such as wages, hours worked, etc. the educator must complete the A\$CEND Eligibility Review Form. The Eligibility Review Form can be accessed [here](#).

Throughout the review, which can take place face-to-face or through electronic means, the A\$CEND program may request, in writing, additional information from the applicant to resolve the inquiry. This additional documentation is to be received within five business days of the request from the A\$CEND program. If the additional documentation is not received within that time, the inquiry will automatically be denied. The A\$CEND program will respond within 15 business days of receipt of all required materials to review the inquiry and provide a decision.

Possible outcomes are:

- Approve the inquiry. The A\$CEND program will notify the applicant, in writing, within 15 business days of review.
- Approve the inquiry with specific requirements. The A\$CEND program will notify the applicant, in writing, within 15 business days of review.
- Deny the inquiry. The A\$CEND program will notify the applicant, in writing, within 15 business days of review.

Contact Information:

A\$CEND Program & Application Questions:

Email ascend@welsfoundation.org or call 786-735-0200

- How to troubleshoot mobile app
- A\$CEND application error messages

ElevatEd

Email support@welsfoundation.org or call 786-735-0200

- Contact ElevatEd for assistance with:
 - Portal support or Account creation
 - Education verification
 - Site roster

CLASS Observations:

Email classinfo@elcmdm.org

If you are missing a CLASS assessment **you must request an assessment. This does not mean that you will be assessed again. Our assessment team will contact you to identify if you have had an assessment in the past and/or schedule an assessment.*

Appendix A

A\$CEND Knowledge Training & Practice Scale				
Award Amount	Level	Knowledge/Training	EDUCATOR CLASS COMPOSITE SCORE	
\$750	11	Bachelor's degree in ECE and higher	Level	Award Amount
\$700	10	Associates degree in ECE with an additional 24 credit hours in ECE	CLASS I: 4.00—4.99 (Pre-K & Toddler) 4.5—5.59 (Infant)	\$500
\$650	9	Associates degree in ECE and higher	CLASS II: 5.00—5.99 (Pre-K & Toddler) 5.6—6.59 (Infant)	\$1,200
\$600	8	45 credits in ECE or Potential certificate/ badge option (TBD)	CLASS III: 6.00—7.00 (Pre-K & Toddler) 6.6—7.00 (Infant)	\$1,500
\$550	7	30 credits in ECE or Potential certificate/ badge option (TBD)		
\$500	6	15 credits in ECE or National CDA/FCCPC or Potential certificate/ badge option (TBD)	LONGEVITY	
\$450	5	9 credits in ECE or Advanced Director's credential or Potential certificate/ badge option (TBD)	Level	Award Amount
\$400	4	36 CEUs in ECE competency area	Longevity I 3-6 Years in ECE Field	\$250
\$350	3	3 credits in ECE or Director's Credential or 27 CEUs in ECE competency area	Longevity II 7-9 Years in ECE Field	\$500
\$300	2	18 CEUs in ECE competency area	Longevity III 10+ Years in ECE Field	\$750
\$250	1	9 CEUs in ECE competency area	*Longevity will be confirmed through verified employment in the educator's ElevatEd Career Journey	
\$200	Required	45 DCF hours and HS/GED (35 DCF hours for Family Childcare Home Providers)		

Appendix B

Thrive By 5 A\$CEND Program Terms and Conditions

This document serves as the Terms and Conditions for an educator's participation in The Children's Trust Thrive By 5 A\$CEND Salary Supplement program (A\$CEND). A\$CEND is The Children's Trust salary supplement program for early learning educators in Miami-Dade County that work for programs participating in The Children's Trust's Thrive by 5 Early Learning Quality Improvement System (QIS).

By participating in A\$CEND and accepting funding from The Children's Trust, an educator expressly agrees to:

- Adhere to all policies and procedures set forth in the Thrive by 5 A\$CEND Handbook.
- Provide an environment conducive to quality learning for children and engage in quality improvement activities in partnership with Thrive by 5 partners.
- Participate in ElevatEd and submit or update personal information, employment information (i.e., hourly wage, position title, hours worked, ages served), education, credentials and follow all PDR data requirements.
- Complete and submit all required or requested documents.
- Regularly update all knowledge and training information in the PDR.
- Provide timely notification to The Children's Trust via A\$CEND application of any changes to the educator's employment that could impact educator's participation in A\$CEND, including but not limited to a change of employment, change of licensure or change of ownership of early learning programs participating in the Trust's Thrive by 5 Early Learning Quality Improvement System.
- Allow The Children's Trust to periodically solicit feedback on A\$CEND from participants in the program for the purpose of continuous quality improvement and system refinements.
- Cooperate and participate in all research evaluations of A\$CEND and the Thrive By 5 QIS.
- Provide information about The Children's Trust Book Club for children birth to 5 and assist families in enrolling for the same.
- Comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, including but not limited to background screenings, the Americans with Disabilities Act, as may be amended from time to time, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as may be amended from time to time.
- Enroll in ACH (Associated Clearing House)/direct deposit for payment of the salary supplement by The Children's Trust using the A\$CEND

application. The ACH enrollment terms and conditions are located at [The Children's Trust ACH terms and conditions](#).

- Update bank account information associated with direct deposit account upon submission of salary supplement application, if applicable.
- Permit The Children's Trust to conduct periodic data quality reviews and on-site verification of employment.

By participating in A\$CEND, an educator expressly understands and agrees to the following:

- This agreement is subject to availability of funds, as determined by the sole discretion of The Children's Trust.
- The Knowledge and Training Pathway, CLASS composite score and longevity in the field as determined by ElevatEd will be used to determine an educator's A\$CEND award.
- Awards are based on information contained in ElevatEd Career Pathway at the time of application submission.
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) scores based on a formal observation conducted through a Thrive by 5 partner agency will be accepted for CLASS A\$CEND award.
- Longevity is determined through previously verified employment in the Thrive by 5 Professional Development Registry, as well as, new employment verified in ElevatEd
- Demonstrate an improvement in the quality of teacher - child interactions as indicated by Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) scores
- The Children's Trust is authorized to publicize aggregate data regarding A\$CEND participation.
- Falsifying data is cause for an educator's termination in the A\$CEND program and repayment of funds to which the educator is not entitled.
- An educator is only a recipient of funding support and is not an employee, agent, or instrumentality of The Children's Trust.
- There are no intended or unintended third-party beneficiaries to this agreement.
- The Children's Trust is a governmental agency and abides by the Public Records Law, Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, and as such, may be required to provide information about A\$CEND program participants in response to a public records request absent a qualifying exemption of which the Educator informs The Children's Trust.

The educator may terminate their participation in the Thrive By 5 A\$CEND program with or without cause at any time by notifying The Children's Trust through the A\$CEND application or in writing via email at Thriveby5@thechildrenstrust.org.

In the event a provider fails to comply with any of the Terms and Conditions of this Agreement, at the sole determination of The Children's Trust, The Children's Trust may withhold or suspend payment and/or terminate an educator's participation in A\$CEND.

Indemnification: An educator shall indemnify, defend and hold harmless The Children's Trust and its officers, employees, agents and instrumentalities from any and all liability, losses or damages, including reasonable attorney's fees and costs of defense, which The Children's Trust or its officers, employees, agents or instrumentalities may incur as a result of any claim, demand, suit, cause of action or proceeding of any kind or nature arising out of, relating to, or resulting from the performance of this contract by an educator.

An educator shall pay all claims and losses in connection therewith and shall investigate and defend all claims, suits or actions of any kind or nature in the name of The Children's Trust, where applicable and in the discretion of The Children's Trust, including appellate proceedings, and shall pay all costs, judgments and reasonable attorney's fees which may issue thereon. An educator agrees that any insurance protection required by this contract or otherwise provided by an educator shall in no way limit the responsibility to indemnify, keep and save harmless and defend, The Children's Trust or its officers, employees and agents.

The provisions of this section on indemnification shall survive the expiration or termination of this agreement.

All information provided on this application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

