



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

HB2420

Introduced 2/4/2025, by Rep. Maura Hirschauer

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

325 ILCS 85/95-10

Amends the Smart Start Illinois Act. Sets forth eligibility requirements for Smart Start Workforce Grants. Provides that a grant applicant must: (i) be a licensed day care home, day care center, or group day care home as of the month prior to the applicant submitting an application and maintain the applicable license for the duration of the grant; (ii) regularly provide year-round child care; (iii) meet minimum enrollment levels for children whose care is paid for by the Child Care Assistance Program, child care subsidies for foster child care, or military child care subsidies. Provides that if an applicant does not meet the minimum enrollment requirements under the Child Care Assistance Program, the applicant may qualify if the applicant maintains specified enrollment levels for children with an individualized education program or children who are English learners. Sets forth the eligibility requirements for licensed day care centers applying for a Smart Start Workforce Grant. Effective July 1, 2025.

LRB104 10080 KTG 20152 b

1 AN ACT concerning children.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The Smart Start Illinois Act is amended by
5 changing Section 95-10 as follows:

6 (325 ILCS 85/95-10)

7 Sec. 95-10. Smart Start Child Care Workforce Compensation
8 Program.

9 (a) The Department of Human Services shall create and
10 establish the Smart Start Child Care Workforce Compensation
11 Program. The purpose of the Smart Start Child Care Workforce
12 Compensation Program is to invest in early childhood education
13 and care service providers, including, but not limited to,
14 providers participating in the Child Care Assistance Program;
15 to expand the supply of high-quality early childhood education
16 and care; and to create a strong and stable early childhood
17 education and care system with attractive wages, high-quality
18 services, and affordable costs.

19 (b) The purpose of the Smart Start Child Care Workforce
20 Compensation Program is to stabilize community-based early
21 childhood education and care service providers, raise the
22 wages of early childhood educators, and support quality
23 enhancements that can position service providers to

1 participate in other public funding streams, such as Preschool
2 for All, in order to further enhance and expand quality
3 service delivery.

4 (c) Subject to appropriation, the Department of Human
5 Services shall implement the Smart Start Child Care Workforce
6 Compensation Program for eligible licensed day care centers,
7 licensed day care homes, and licensed group day care homes by
8 October 1, 2024, or as soon as practicable, following
9 completion of a planning and transition year. By October 1,
10 2025, or as soon as practicable, and for each year thereafter,
11 subject to appropriation, the Department of Human Services or
12 the Department of Early Childhood shall continue to operate
13 the Smart Start Child Care Workforce Compensation Program
14 annually with all licensed day care centers, licensed day care
15 homes, and licensed group day care homes that meet eligibility
16 requirements. The Smart Start Child Care Workforce
17 Compensation Program shall operate separately from and shall
18 not supplant the Child Care Assistance Program as provided for
19 in Section 9A-11 of the Illinois Public Aid Code.

20 (d) The Department of Human Services shall adopt
21 administrative rules by October 1, 2024 to facilitate
22 administration of the Smart Start Child Care Workforce
23 Compensation Program, including, but not limited to,
24 provisions for program eligibility, the application and
25 funding calculation process, eligible expenses, required wage
26 floors, and requirements for financial and personnel reporting

1 and monitoring requirements. Eligibility and funding
2 provisions shall be based on appropriation and a current model
3 of the cost to provide child care services by a licensed child
4 care center or licensed family child care home.

5 (e) To qualify for the Smart Start Workforce Grants, the
6 applicant must meet all of the following requirements in
7 addition to any other applicable requirements adopted by rule:

8 (1) Be a licensed day care home, licensed day care
9 center, or licensed group day care home, as defined in 89
10 Ill. Adm. Code 406.2, 407.45, and 408.5, as of the month
11 prior to the applicant submitting an application and
12 maintain the applicable license for the duration of the
13 grant.

14 (2) Regularly provide year-round child care. As used
15 in this subsection, "year-round child care" means child
16 care that is open and offering at least 8 consecutive
17 hours of care per day, 5 days per week for at least 47
18 weeks per year.

19 (3) Demonstrate the following enrollment of children
20 paid for by the Child Care Assistance Program, as provided
21 in 89 Ill. Adm. Code 50, the Department of Children and
22 Family Services' child care subsidies for foster child
23 care, as provided under Section 5a of the Children and
24 Family Services Act, and military child care subsidies
25 paid for by the United States Department of Defense, in at
26 least one month beginning on or after January of the

1 previous calendar year, and prior to the date of
2 application. The minimum enrollments shall be:

3 (A) For day care centers, at least 15% of licensed
4 capacity.

5 (B) For day care homes, at least one child.

6 (C) For group day care homes, at least 2 children.

7 (4) If an applicant does not meet the minimum
8 enrollment requirements under the Child Care Assistance
9 Program, the applicant may qualify if the applicant
10 demonstrates the following enrollment of children with an
11 individualized education program (IEP):

12 (A) For day care centers, at least 10% of licensed
13 capacity.

14 (B) For day care homes, at least one child.

15 (C) For group day care homes, at least 2 children.

16 (5) If an applicant does not meet the minimum
17 enrollment requirements under the Child Care Assistance
18 Program, the applicant may qualify if the applicant
19 demonstrates the following enrollment of children who are
20 English learners as defined in Section 14C-2 of the School
21 Code:

22 (A) For day care centers, at least 10% of licensed
23 capacity.

24 (B) For day care homes, at least one child.

25 (C) For group day care homes, at least 2 children.

26 (f) For licensed day care centers, eligibility shall be

1 determined at the classroom level. A classroom must meet the
2 following requirements to be eligible to receive an award:

3 (1) May receive Early Childhood Block Grant, Head
4 Start, or Early Head Start funds.

5 (2) Not serve school-age children as defined in 89
6 Ill. Adm. Code 407.45.

7 (3) If serving infants or toddlers (children under 2
8 years of age), care for a minimum of 4 children.

9 (4) If serving 2-year-olds or both 2-year-olds and
10 3-year-olds, care for a minimum of 8 children.

11 (5) If serving children 3 to 5 years old, care for a
12 minimum of 12 children.

13 (Source: P.A. 103-8, eff. 6-7-23; 103-605, eff. 7-1-24.)

14 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect July 1,
15 2025.