

Summit County Child Care Tuition Assistance Guidelines
Summit First Steps & Summit Pre-K (SPK)
2024-2025 Program Year

Summit County Child Care Tuition Assistance (SCTA) was created to offer financial assistance to families living or working in Summit County. This assistance is available for children between the ages of birth and 5 years attending a participating, licensed childcare center or family childcare home. Tuition Assistance is intended to help our workforce and is available to qualified working families. The amount of assistance is determined based on gross income, childcare cost, parents' work schedule, the number of children in care, and other criteria as described below. The Assistance is paid directly to the participating childcare Center on behalf of approved families and is intended only for the Centers' use to cover the true cost of care.

Summit County Tuition Assistance includes:

- Summit Pre-Kindergarten (SPK) - for children in the two years before they are age-eligible to enter Kindergarten. SPK is a Summit County Strong Future Initiative and is funded by Summit County Government.
- First Steps – for infants and toddlers not yet age-eligible for SPK. First Steps is funded through a partnership agreement between the Towns of Breckenridge, Frisco, Silverthorne, Dillon, Blue River and the County of Summit.

The following policies and procedures have been established to ensure that available funds are used in the fairest and most effective way possible. Early Childhood Options (ECO) reserves the right to amend the eligibility criteria or to request additional information at any time. Any fraud or misrepresentation made by applicants, participants, or recipients is unlawful and will be punished to the full extent of the law which will include fines, restitution, and possible imprisonment. Program funding is limited, and all tuition assistance is subject to the availability of funds. It is the responsibility of the Centers and families to inform the ECO if they feel that the policies and procedures herein are being violated.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

All families, including currently participating families, are required to apply during the annual enrollment/application period. With the exception of Qualified Permitted Changes described below, no applications will be considered until the next annual enrollment deadline.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR TUITION ASSISTANCE

- Age Eligibility:
 - Summit First Steps (0-3): Participating child's birthday must be on or after October 2, 2021.
 - Summit PreK (3&4):
 - SPK 3 - Participating child's birthday must be on or before October 1, 2021
 - SPK 4 - Participating child's birthday must be on or before October 1, 2020
- Participating child/ren must be enrolled in a qualified childcare program. A qualified childcare program can be a School District preschool, childcare center or family childcare home. Program qualifications are:

- Childcare program must have a childcare license in good standing from the Colorado Department of Human Services, and
- Childcare program must have a Colorado Shines Quality rating of 2 or above ([Current SCTA Provider List](#))
- Families must live and/or work in Summit County.
- At least one member of the household is required to work for a business located in and serving Summit County.
- To access full time childcare schedule for **SPK** (4 or 5 days/ week) Both parents must be employed and at least one parent must work a minimum average of 30 hours per week annually. Household income must be under the \$250K income cap with household assets not exceeding \$225k (excludes primary residents, college funds and retirement funds)
- To access full time childcare schedule (4 or 5 days/ week) for **First Steps**, both parents must work 30 + hours / week and the household income must be under the \$210K income cap with household assets not exceeding \$225k (excludes primary residents, college funds and retirement funds)
- Self-employed applicants must maintain an average income that exceeds their business expenses and must show that his/her taxable gross income divided by the number of hours of care used for the employment activity equals at least the current Federal Minimum Wage.
- Applicants who are eligible for Colorado's Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program (UPK) must apply for UPK assistance before they are eligible to apply for SPK.

DETERMINATION OF TUITION CREDIT AMOUNT

The amount of tuition credit is based on a sliding scale and will be determined using the following factors: gross income, preschool program/child care center/family child care provider costs, Colorado Shines quality rating of program, parent/legal guardian work schedule (applicable only for children whose parent(s)/legal guardian works but does not reside in Summit County), enrollment in other programs such as CCCAP, Head Start and/or Universal Preschool (UPK) Colorado.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants are required to apply during the annual enrollment/application period. *The current deadline for applications is Friday, May 31, 2024.* Except for Qualified Permitted Changes as described below, no out of cycle applications will be considered until the next annual enrollment deadline.

Applicants will be required to complete the SCTA at <https://eco1.smapply.org/>.

ADDITIONAL GENERAL POLICIES

ASSET TESTING

SCTA may require a comprehensive list of household assets and liabilities. A child may be ineligible or disqualified from the program if assets of the parent(s)/legal guardian exceed

\$250,000. Some assets will be exempt, such as primary residence equity, retirement accounts, health savings and college savings accounts.

OUT OF COUNTY APPLICANTS

If a parent or legal guardian works in Summit County but the child does not reside in Summit County, at least one parent(s)/legal guardian must be working a minimum average of 30 hours per week annually in Summit County. If, during the program year, the family member's employment in Summit County upon which tuition credit was based, is terminated for any reason, the child may remain in the program for up to eight (8) weeks without disruption to the tuition credits. If within eight weeks the family becomes compliant with the eligibility requirements, they may remain in the program for the duration of the program year. If after eight weeks the family is not in compliance with the eligibility requirements, tuition credits will be terminated immediately. It is the family's responsibility to report these changes in a timely manner.

QUALIFIED PERMITTED CHANGES/OUT OF CYCLE APPLICATIONS

CURRENTLY ENROLLED FAMILIES: If a current tuition credit recipient is experiencing an emergency including but not limited to birth, adoption, loss of job, or other situation that significantly impacts family income, they may be eligible for amended tuition credits. The parent(s)/legal guardian will need to contact the Enrollment and Eligibility Specialist at 970-406-3060 directly to discuss options.

NEW FAMILIES: If a family becomes eligible because of residency or new employment in Summit County, they may be eligible to apply for tuition credits outside of the application window. If you have a new child or received enrollment offer from a qualified program. The parent(s)/legal guardian will need to contact the Enrollment and Eligibility Specialist at 970-406-3060 directly to discuss options.

COLORADO CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CCCAP)

In some instances, children may be eligible for both the [Colorado Child Care Assistance Program \(CCCAP\)](#) and summit child care tuition credits. In such instances, all the eligibility criteria mentioned above are applicable, as well as:

- Families must be in good standing with their local CCCAP office and must comply with all CCCAP rules and regulations.
- If during the award cycle a family becomes ineligible for CCCAP, they may submit a complete application with all the required documentation to be considered for an adjustment to their tuition credit.

An application will only be considered when the application is completed and submitted in full. Any approved credit may be prorated back to the date of the completed application.

Please note, the CCCAP Program is considered the payer of first resort. The Summit tuition credit can be used to cover a portion or all of the difference between the CCCAP reimbursement and the actual rate of tuition. If parent(s)/legal guardian(s) apply for tuition credits and appear to be potentially eligible for CCCAP, they will be referred to the CCCAP office before the application can be further processed.

For more information about Summit County CCCAP, please call 970-668-9160.

UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL (UPK) COLORADO AND HEAD START

If a 4-year old is eligible for [Universal Preschool \(UPK\) Colorado](#) or [The Summit Head Start 0-5 \(HS0-5\) program](#), he or she may also be eligible for SPK tuition credits. In such instances, all the above eligibility criteria mentioned above are applicable, as well as:

- Parent(s)/legal guardian must comply with the participation requirements for UPK or Head Start.

Please note, UPK and Head Start are considered the payer of first resort. If a family applies for Summit Pre-K tuition credits and appears to be potentially eligible for UPK or Head Start, they may be referred to these programs.

For more information about UPK, please call 1-800-799-5876

For more information about Head Start, please call 970-513-1170

ATTENDANCE

It is expected that children participating in the Summit Tuition Assistance Program will regularly attend based on their approved enrollment days. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are required to notify the preschool/childcare/family childcare program if the child is going to be absent and the reason for the absence when appropriate.

Consistent excused absences may result in a loss or deduction of your child's tuition credit. Childcare programs are required to notify Early Childhood Options anytime a child's attendance falls below 75% of his/her regular schedule.

EVALUATION AND DATA TRACKING

The Program will be using a variety of strategies to evaluate the overall success of the program. Short and long-term program data may be gathered through early childhood assessments, interviews, surveys, observations, and small groups. Parent(s)/legal guardian will be asked to sign an information sharing release, within the guidelines of the stated confidentiality agreement.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITY

1. Parent/s or legal guardians are responsible for reporting to the Enrollment and Eligibility Specialist, in writing or by email, any changes in their child's preschool or childcare schedule, or any changes of program.

2. Every parent(s) or legal guardian applying for tuition credit will be required to sign a statement acknowledging that they do not have any outstanding debt to any licensed preschool program, childcare center, and/or family childcare provider or have made agreeable arrangements to pay their debt. If it is brought to Early Childhood Options' attention by any means that a participating family has an outstanding debt, an investigation will take place. If the allegations are found, the tuition credit will be placed on-hold for a probationary period of 30 calendar days.

During the 30 days, the family must pay the balance of their debt or make acceptable arrangements for payment. If these conditions have not been met after 30 days, there will be immediate termination of funding and additional penalties adopted by ECO may occur.

A family may re-apply at the next annual deadline if they have an age eligible child and only after the balance is paid in full to the preschool program, childcare center or family childcare provider.

3. Loss of Employment must be reported immediately to the Enrollment and Eligibility Specialist at Early Childhood Options.

4. If, during the 2024-2025 school year, household income either increases by 10% or decreases by 10%, the family must notify the Program Administrator within 20 days of the date of such change to my income. Household income includes wages, assets or other property obtained during such a school year.

5. Applicants must sign a complete "Participant Responsibility Agreement" as well as a Verification and Acknowledgement form to attest that all the information that has been provided as part of their application is true and complete.

6. It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/legal guardian to comply with the rules and regulations of the preschool program/childcare center/family childcare provider and SCTA, including but not limited to those relating to absences. The parent must agree to notify the preschool program/childcare center/family childcare provider if the child is going to be absent and the reason for the absence when appropriate.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Early Childhood Options (ECO) respects the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of personal or sensitive information disclosed through the SCTA and takes reasonable measures to protect the unauthorized disclosure of such information.

ECO may disclose certain anonymous, aggregated data and provide it to early childhood programs, funding sources and governmental agencies either for market research and statistical purposes or to ensure compliance with the agreements between ECO and early childhood programs, funding sources, governmental agencies, and similar organizations.

APPLICATION PROCESS & DEADLINES

Applications Available:	Wednesday, May 1, 2024
Applications Due:	Friday, May 31, 2024
Assistance Cycle:	September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025

The application will be available online through Early Childhood Options website at: <http://www.earlychildhoodoptions.org/>

Please complete and submit your application with all required documentation to Early Childhood Options by Friday May 31, 2024. **COMPLETE applications will be processed in the order they are received.** Late applications will not be accepted or considered.

Physical Address

Mailing Address

Contact Information

Early Childhood Options
330 Fiedler Ave, Suite 100
Dillon, CO 80435

Early Childhood Options
Attn: Child Care Program
PO Box 3355
Dillon, CO 80435

SCTA Enrollment & Eligibility Specialist
summitprek@earlychildhoodoptions.org
Phone: 970-406-3060