



FYE 2026 - Eligibility Guidelines for the Early Care and Education Scholarship Program – Funding of Last Resort

The Mahaska Wapello Early Childhood Iowa Early Care & Education Scholarship Program can help income eligible families with the cost of preschool tuition. Families may apply for the program by submitting a Scholarship Application to the MWECEI Area Director. Funds are limited and may be de-appropriated at any time within the fiscal year.

Need for Service and Supplanting Federal & State Preschool Funds

Each family must have an income need for service to be eligible for the scholarship program. All families' income must fall at or below the 200% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) 2025 Guidelines. All families must also apply to see if they are eligible for Child Care Assistance (CCA) funding and be denied before this application can be considered. If a family falls at or below the 100% FPL, the family may qualify for Head Start and must apply to Head Start and be either denied or put on the Head Start waiting list, before this application can be considered. **All four-year olds will also be referred to the appropriate community school district's public school voluntary four-year-old preschool program (V4yPSP) and be denied or put on a waiting list, before this application can be considered.**

Child Age Requirements

FYE2026 MWECEI Early Care & Education Scholarship applications will be available for preschool providers and parents to download from our website after August 15th, 2025 (www.mweci.org). The following documentation must accompany the FYE2026 applications before processing.

- Applications for children that are 5 years old by September 15th, 2025, must include supportive documentation (developmental or social/emotional delays) as to why they are not attending kindergarten, and meet the income guidelines of 200% FPL or below, apply for CCA funding and be denied, and live in Mahaska or Wapello County.
- Applications for children that are 4 years old by September 15th, 2025, must include a **Sieda Head Start** denial letter and/or a **Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children** public school denial letter, and meet the income guidelines of 200% FPL or below, apply for CCA funding and be denied, and live in Mahaska or Wapello County.
- Applications for children that are 3 years old by September 15th, 2025, who have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), must include a **Sieda Head Start** denial letter and/or a **Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children** public school denial letter, apply for CCA funding and be denied, and meet the income guidelines of 200% FPL or below, and live in Mahaska or Wapello County.
- Applications for all other 3-year olds who turn 3 years by September 15th, 2025, must apply for CCA funding and be denied, and must meet the income guidelines of 200% FPL or below, and live in Mahaska or Wapello County.

Information Needed to Process Your Application

You must provide income verification with your application to determine if you are eligible for a MWECEI Early Care & Education Scholarship.

- Both earned and unearned income* is used to determine eligibility. See attached Federal Poverty Guidelines.

If you are working, you must provide proof of your income from the past 60 days (2 months), such as pay stubs, or a copy of your most recent tax return. If you are self-employed, you must provide your tax return.

- *If your household receives any other money (unearned income), such as unemployment benefits, SSI, Social Security, child support, veterans benefits or any other money you receive from a source outside of a job, you must document this income on the application as well.

Co-Pay

Each family may be responsible for paying for part of their tuition costs, **IF the total monthly cost exceeds the \$175.00 per monthly cap set by the MWECEI Board of Directors**, then this amount not covered is called a parent co-pay. The family is responsible to pay the parent co-pay directly to the early care and education provider.

Eligibility Determinations

The MWECEI Area Director will process your application as soon as possible, upon receipt of the application and upon verification that the selected early care and education provider meets all the requirements within the provider agreement. You will be notified regarding your eligibility in writing with a Notice of Program Eligibility. This will tell you what children are approved for scholarships, the start date and end date of assistance, and your family's parent co-pay amount, if applicable.

Notification of Changes

You must notify the MWECEI Area Director about the following changes within 10 days of the change:

- Address change
- A change in who lives in your home
- A change in income
- Change in preschool provider / change in attendance

Early Care & Education Provider Requirements

The early care and education provider you choose for enrolment of your child(ren) must be licensed by IHHS (Iowa Health and Human Services) or deemed "exempt" if they are under the umbrella of the DE (Department of Education), before payments can be made. To be "approved," the early care and education provider must complete a provider agreement and adhere to the following criteria:

The early care and education provider must provide documentation (a copy) of the following requirements identified within the preschool provider agreement:

- **DHS License (or letter of "exempt" status)**
- **Verification of CCA recipient**
- **At least one or more: Copy of their current 1) NAEYC Accreditation Certificate; 2) IQ4K Level 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 Certificate; 3) Iowa QPPS Verification Visit Documentation; 4) verification of meeting Head Start Performance Standards; 5) documentation of reasons (make a case) why the center is not involved in any type of "initiative of quality" verification.**
- **A copy of their business policies and/or parent handbook**
- **A copy of their business liability insurance**

Step UP in Quality - Additional Requirements for FYE2026:

In support of early care, health and education state-wide initiatives that are recognized as signs of "high quality / best practice child care and preschool," all early care & education programs partnering with Mahaska Wapello Early Childhood Iowa and receiving FYE 2026 Early Care and Education Scholarship Program Funds must also agree to partner and develop a CQI plan with each of the local 1) Region IV - CCR&R Child Care Consultant; 2) the Child Care Nurse Consultant (AHFA); 3) and the Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant to assess local levels of early care and education quality. Providers must work with each of the above-mentioned consultants to plan and execute their CQI action plans. Providers with verified successful implementation of their CQI goals are eligible for additional QI funds to assist with costs for materials to support/maintain their identified CQI goals.

All providers must sign a Provider Agreement before payment can be made to them on behalf of eligible children. This agreement outlines the terms and conditions for the MWECI Early Care & Education Scholarship Program and certifies the reimbursement rates the MWECI Board of Directors will allow the fiscal agent to pay. No tuition scholarship payments will be paid out UNTIL all forms and required documentation has been received by the MWECI Area Director.

Provider Notification

If your family is eligible for the MWECI Early Care & Education Scholarship Program, your provider will receive a copy of your Notice of Program Eligibility. This document will tell the provider what children are approved for assistance, the start date and end date of assistance, and your family's co-pay amount, if applicable. **If you use a provider before you are notified that you are eligible for the MWECI Early Care & Education Scholarship Program, you will have to pay the provider yourself.**

For more information contact:

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