**Section 50.530 Eligibility**

a) To the extent resources permit, the Great START Program will be open to all eligible child care personnel Statewide who have attained education above licensing requirements as defined by the administrative rules of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and who are employed and working in Illinois. Child care personnel may apply for wage supplements commensurate with their education. Child care personnel will be required to submit an application to determine eligibility for the wage supplement. The Department may, pursuant to subsection (e), alter and prioritize the eligibility criteria depending on available resources. For FY 2001, child care personnel must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1) completed 2 years of continuous full-time employment or self-employment with the same program in a position working directly with children at the time of initial application and for 6-month intervals thereafter;

2) earning an hourly wage of no more than the amount established by the T.E.A.C.H. Program income eligibility guidelines, which for FY 2001 is $15;

3) employed in a full year, full day program, defined as a program that operates 12 months a year and serves children a minimum of 8 hours daily;

4) working full time, defined as 30 hours per week or more; and

5) working with children more than 50% of the employment day.

b) Beginning in FY 2002, in addition to the above criteria, the following eligibility criteria will be available to applicants:

1) completed one year of continuous employment with the same program in a position working directly with children at the time of initial application and for 6-month intervals thereafter;

2) working part time, defined as 15 to 29 hours per week (supplement will be pro-rated); or

3) employed as a program administrator working with children less than 50% of the employment day.

c) The applicant is responsible for providing all information and documentation to demonstrate his/her qualifications for a particular wage supplement level and option. Required information includes, but is not limited to, official college transcripts, name, address, telephone number, social security number, birth date, employment information verified by the employer such as employer name and address, position, wages (including pay stubs), and length of service. Day care home and group day care home applicants will be required to submit documentation to substantiate the hourly wage requirement, including copies of tax information and forms provided to the Internal Revenue Service and/or to the Illinois Department of Revenue.

d) Once an applicant is determined to be eligible for the Great START Program, he or she may apply for a wage supplement payment at 6-month intervals. Additional payments are not automatic. Child care personnel are required to submit a renewal application for additional supplements, including employment and wage documentation. Renewal applications must be submitted within 30 days after the date the individual becomes eligible for the semi-annual payment.

e) Wage supplements will be awarded as long as sufficient funds are available. Approved applications that are received after funding runs out will remain on file. These applications will be considered first for funding when additional resources become available either through increased appropriation or attrition. Approved applications will be prioritized for payment in the following order:

1) all applicants on a waiting list from FY 2001;

2) all applicants that meet criteria under subsection (a);

3) all applicants that meet criteria under subsection (b)(1);

4) all applicants that meet criteria under subsection (b)(2);

5) all applicants that meet criteria under subsection (b)(3).

(Source: Added at 25 Ill. Reg. 8176, effective June 23, 2001)