

Pathway II Implementation Checklist – Child Care Programs

The purpose of this document is to provide high-level guidance to help child care programs keep on track with awarding and managing Pathway II funds. View the [Pathway II Program Resources webpage](#) for more detailed supports such as recorded webinars, forms and letters, and guidance documents. View the [Early Learning Scholarships homepage](#) for the most current version of the *State Early Learning Scholarships Policy Manual*.

This document will provide guidance on what your program should be doing on a monthly basis to ensure you are managing funds appropriately and proactively.

Contact [Mindy Hortsch at Milestones](#) with questions.

Ongoing

- Notify Milestones of any changes with your license, Parent Aware Rating or program overall that may impact your Pathway II funding.
- Make sure your Parent Aware Four-Star rating is current. If you lose your rating or you receive a lower rating, you will lose your Pathway II funding.
- Maintain scholarship documents for seven years. Scholarship records contain private data, so must be securely maintained.
 - This includes applications, renewal forms, proof of eligibility, attendance, award letters, invoice forms, justification of award amount and payment requests, and any approvals or special circumstances from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) or Milestones.
- As requested, participate in the Early Learning Scholarships Program monitoring process. Applications, renewal forms (including income documentation), and attendance records may be requested by MDE or Milestones for the purpose of verification of invoices and/or for the purpose of limited scope or formal monitoring.

Every Month

- Track attendance and award balances, record monthly when requesting payment.
- Applications (as needed, see step-by-step instructions below):
 - As needed, have families complete *Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway II Application* and submit eligibility documentation.
 - Submit **a copy** of the new application to Milestones within 30 days of the requested award date.
 - For every newly awarded scholarship, send the *Pathway II Award Letter for Families*.
- Renewals (step-by-step directions are below)
 - Review children’s renewal dates to identify upcoming renewals.
 - 90 days before each child’s renewal date, give the *Early Learning Scholarship - Pathway II Renewal Form* to the family.

- Submit a **copy** of the completed *Renewal Form* to Milestones as soon as you receive it. Your target is 30 days before the renewal date, and the final deadline is one day before the Renewal Date.
- For every renewed scholarship, send the *Pathway II Award Letter for Families*.
- Request payment for services delivered bi-weekly or monthly based on the calendar provided in the *Invoice Form – Pathway II*.
 - Submit invoices **within 30 days of services**; you may not invoice after 90 days.
- As children are screened, update Milestones to reflect that they have met the screening requirement.
- If a child has left your program, changed schedules, or are now covered by another funding stream, work with Milestones to adjust or cancel awards as needed.
- Review that your program is on track to award and spend 100 percent of the fiscal year dollars.
- Keep record of payments, remaining award amounts, etc.

Key Months

July

- On July 1, the new fiscal year begins. Your program will have access to the next fiscal year’s scholarship dollars (part of the two-year award in even years and based on new funding in odd years).
- Complete the required fiscal year training and documents. Milestones will send instructions to your program. Requirements include:
 - Watching required webinars.
 - Submitting required documents to get set up for payments (Direct Deposit and Portal).
 - Calculating the amount of funding you need to reserve for children who will renew.
- If you have funding left over after reserving for renewals, award new children. Determine award amount for funds based on child’s tuition and the amount of available funding.
 - October 15 is the deadline to award 100 percent of your fiscal year’s funding (including funds reserved for renewals for children that renew throughout the year).
- Review your approved Pathway II Plan for Scholarship Use, and if there has been a change in use of funds, request an amendment with MDE.

August

- If your program has awarded any new children or have any children renewing that will turn 5 years of age prior to September 1:
 - All Renewal Forms and new Pathway II Applications need to be submitted to Milestones no later than **August 10** or the scholarship will not be awarded/renewed. Any child that does turn 5 years of age prior to September 1 will terminate on August 31 regardless if the child is held back for any reason or if the parent or school decided to do distance learning.
 - Example: If the child renewed or was awarded on July 15 and the child is age eligible for Kindergarten on August 31 of that current school year, please submit the Renewal Form/Application to Milestones no later than August 10 (or you risk the chance of not being reimbursed for the child’s tuition and fees).*
- Complete all FY24 Pathway II Child Care Kickoff Requirements by August 18, 2023.
 - Milestones will not reimburse your program for services until all requirements are complete.
 - If you do not complete the FY24 Pathway II Child Care Kickoff Requirements by August 18, your Pathway II funds will be returned to MDE and awarded to other children.

September

- Continue to submit applications to Milestones to prepare for the October 15 deadline for awarding.
- All or nearly all of your fiscal year's funding should be awarded to new children or reserved for children that will renew later in the year. If you have available funds, you should have a plan for awarding them by October 15.

October

- Continue to submit applications to Milestones before the October 15 deadline for awarding.
- Confirm all fiscal year dollars have been awarded to children by **October 15**. This means that all applications and eligibility have been confirmed and application copies have been sent to Milestones.
 - If you have funds that have not been awarded by October 15, MDE will request a plan from your program. Your program must meet all deadlines to keep your Pathway II funding.
 - If your program does not submit the October 15 plan for awarding, your unobligated Pathway II funds will be returned to MDE and awarded to other children.

January

- In odd years, complete the program application to receive Pathway II scholarship dollars from MDE. MDE anticipates that the next application will be in winter/spring 2025.
- In addition to your monthly reviews, do a mid-year check of awards. Make sure that you have informed Milestones of any children that have left your program or have had a change in award amount.
- In addition to your monthly reviews, do a mid-year check of your invoices. Make sure that you have requested payment at least once per month, and within 30 days. Submit any invoices that may have been missed or delayed in the last 90 days.

April

- Confirm that your program is on track to award and spend 100 percent of the fiscal year dollars.
- If children have left your program and you have funds available, any final applications should be submitted to Milestones right away.
 - The deadline to award new scholarships for the fiscal year is **May 15**.

May

- Submit any final new applications to Milestones no later than **May 15**.
- Starting May 15, begin to have families complete *Early Learning Scholarship Application – Pathway II* for the upcoming fiscal year at open houses and enrollment opportunities.

June

- Make sure your program has awarded and spent 100 percent of the fiscal year dollars.
- The final day of the fiscal year is June 30.

Important Processes

View the “Applications and Letters” section of the [Pathway II Program Resources webpage](#) for copies of the *Pathway II Application*, *Pathway II Renewal Form*, *Award Letter to Families*, and *Notice to Renew Letter for Families*. View the “Translated Documents” section for versions of these forms and letters in multiple languages.

Processing a New Application

It is the responsibility of each child care program to accept applications and eligibility/income verification from your families. Once you have received the form from a family you must:

- Confirm the parent has completed all required fields.
- Confirm the parent has signed and dated the application.
- Confirm a program representative has completed and signed the Program Representative section.
- Confirm the proof of eligibility is valid, dated within six months (if using paystubs), or is valid at the time of application (i.e., Free and Reduced-Price Meals or Head Start).
 - Option 1: Proof demonstrates current participation in the public assistance or publicly funded program.
 - If the applicant selected multiple publicly funded programs, highlight the one they have submitted documentation for.
 - Option 2: Income documentation that proves the family qualifies by income and matches the information provided on the income page of the application.
 - Acceptable forms of income verification may include:
 - The previous year’s W-2 form
 - Two most recent pay stubs (must be dated within six months of the award date)
 - Financial aid statement
 - Statement from an employer on company letterhead
 - If other types of documentation are not available, the previous year’s tax filing documents may be used
 - Verify that the family meets gross annual income eligibility.
 - If paid biweekly, take the paystub x 26
 - If paid twice per month, take the paystub x 24
 - If paid monthly, take the paystub x 12
- Write the Award Date and start date in the Program Representative/Award Verification section of the application.
 - Reminder: The Award Date must be equal to or after the parent/guardian signature date and the Award Verification Date (program representative signature date).
- Send a **copy** of the application to Milestones within 30 days of the requested award date.
- Send the *Pathway II Award Letter for Families* to the parent/guardian.
- Keep the application, attendance, eligibility documentation, award letter, and invoices on file (securely stored) for seven years.

Processing a Renewal Application

- Send the *Pathway II Notice to Renew Letter for Parents* with a copy of the *Renewal Form* to families 90 days before their renewal date.
- Follow up with families as needed to make sure the signed *Renewal Form* is submitted prior to their renewal date. Encourage families to submit the *Renewal Form* 30 days before their renewal date.
Note: Families do not need to submit eligibility documentation with the Renewal Form.
- Confirm the parent has completed all required fields and that the parent has signed and dated the *Renewal Form* prior to the renewal date.
- Confirm the program representative has completed and signed the designated section of the *Renewal Form*.
- Write the new award amount on the *Renewal Form*.
- Once the completed *Renewal Form* is on file, submit a copy to Milestones. The target to submit is 30 days before the renewal date, and the final deadline is one day before the renewal date.
- Send the *Pathway II Award Letter for Families*.

Note: Milestones **must** receive the *Renewal Form* prior to the child's renewal date or the scholarship may be cancelled. This is extremely important for children eligible to renew in the summer months, just prior to beginning kindergarten. If a kindergarten-eligible child's renewal form is not received by August 10, you risk the chance of not being reimbursed for the child's fees.

Completing the *Invoice Form – Pathway II*

- Invoices **must** be completed in bi-weekly, four-week, or monthly increments following the Milestones Reimbursement Calendar or MDE Service Period Calendar within the *Invoice Form – Pathway II* document.
 - Invoices must be submitted at least monthly.
 - Invoices must be submitted within 30 days of the end of the month, and invoices **cannot** be processed after 90 days from the last day of a service period. Again, submit invoice forms monthly to avoid complications with reimbursement.
 - Service periods will always begin on a day highlighted in yellow on the calendar.
- Before submitting your invoice forms to Milestones, be sure the cover page is completely filled out and signed.
- Complete the invoice form and confirm that each child's information is correct.
 - You may use the "Award Amount" noted on the invoice form for each child to communicate any increases/decreases in a child's amount.
 - If a child stops attending your program please note the child's last day of care in the blank box below the child's "Scheduled Days to Attend" on the corresponding invoice and enter the final amount spent as the child's award amount.
 - When entering the "Child's Number of Scheduled days to Attend":
 - If a child's typical schedule is Monday – Friday and Monday is a Holiday, the child's number of Scheduled Days for the week would = 5 with 1 Holiday.
 - If a child's typical schedule is Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday and Monday is a Holiday, the child's number of Scheduled Days for the week would = 3 with 0 Holidays.

Note: You must keep attendance records and/or sign in/out documents for all children and have them available upon request. Early Learning Scholarships Program policy requires that daily attendance and invoicing records be retained at the site where services are delivered for **seven years** after the date of service.