



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

JOSH STEIN  
GOVERNOR

DEVDUTTA SANGVAI  
SECRETARY

April 1, 2026

**SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

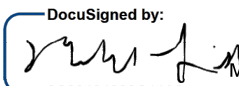
Mr. Brian Matteson, Director  
Fiscal Research Division  
Suite 619, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925

Dear Director Matteson:

Session Law 2023-134, Section 9D.1.(f) and NC General Statute 143B-168.10A require the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), to submit an annual report on the NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) program to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the House Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the Office of State Budget and Management, and the Fiscal Research Division. Pursuant to the provisions of law, the Department is pleased to submit the attached report.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Karen Wade, Director of Policy, at [Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
3C33184820C14A9... Michael Leighs, on behalf of Devdutta  
Devdutta Sangvai  
Secretary



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

JOSH STEIN  
GOVERNOR

DEVDUTTA SANGVAI  
SECRETARY

April 1, 2026

**SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The Honorable Donna White, Chair  
House Appropriations Committee on  
Health and Human Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 307B, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

The Honorable Timothy Reeder, Chair  
House Appropriations Committee on  
Health and Human Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 416B, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

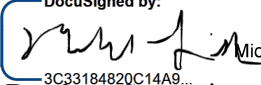
The Honorable Larry Potts, Chair  
House Appropriations Committee on  
Health and Human Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 307B1, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

Dear Chairmen:

Session Law 2023-134, Section 9D.1.(f) and NC General Statute 143B-168.10A require the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), to submit an annual report on the NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) program to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the House Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the Office of State Budget and Management, and the Fiscal Research Division. Pursuant to the provisions of law, the Department is pleased to submit the attached report.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Karen Wade, Director of Policy, at [Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
3C33184820C14A9... Michael Leighs, on behalf of Devdutta  
Devdutta Sangvai  
Secretary



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

JOSH STEIN  
GOVERNOR

DEVDUTTA SANGVAI  
SECRETARY

April 1, 2026

**SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The Honorable Jim Burgin, Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee on  
Health and Human Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 620, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

The Honorable Amy Galey, Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee on  
Health and Human Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 311, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

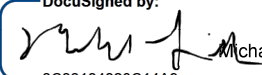
The Honorable Benton Sawrey, Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee on  
Health and Human Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 521, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

Dear Chairmen:

Session Law 2023-134, Section 9D.1.(f) and NC General Statute 143B-168.10A require the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), to submit an annual report on the NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) program to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the House Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the Office of State Budget and Management, and the Fiscal Research Division. Pursuant to the provisions of law, the Department is pleased to submit the attached report.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Karen Wade, Director of Policy, at [Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
3C33184820C14A9...  
Michael Leighs, on behalf of Devdutta  
Devdutta Sangvai  
Secretary



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

JOSH STEIN  
GOVERNOR

DEVDUTTA SANGVAI  
SECRETARY

April 1, 2026

**SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The Honorable Carla Cunningham, Chair  
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on  
Health and Human Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 402, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

The Honorable Donny Lambeth, Chair  
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on  
Health and Human Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 303, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

The Honorable Larry Potts, Chair  
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on  
Health and Human Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 307B1, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

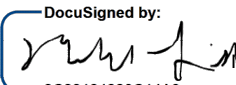
The Honorable Jim Burgin, Chair  
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on  
Health and Human Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 620, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

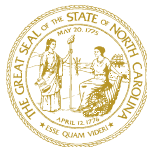
Dear Chairmen:

Session Law 2023-134, Section 9D.1.(f) and NC General Statute 143B-168.10A require the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), to submit an annual report on the NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) program to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the House Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the Office of State Budget and Management, and the Fiscal Research Division. Pursuant to the provisions of law, the Department is pleased to submit the attached report.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Karen Wade, Director of Policy, at [Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
Michael Leighs, on behalf of Devdutta  
3C33184820C14A9...  
Devdutta Sangvai  
Secretary



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

JOSH STEIN  
GOVERNOR

DEVPUTTA SANGVAI  
SECRETARY

April 1, 2026

**SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The Honorable Phil Berger, Chair  
Joint Legislative Commission on  
Governmental Operations  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 2007, Legislative Building  
Raleigh, NC 27601

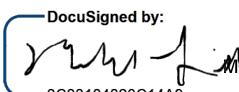
The Honorable Destin Hall, Chair  
Joint Legislative Commission on  
Governmental Operations  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 2304, Legislative Building  
Raleigh, NC 27601

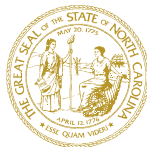
Dear Chairmen:

Session Law 2023-134, Section 9D.1.(f) and NC General Statute 143B-168.10A require the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), to submit an annual report on the NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) program to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the House Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the Office of State Budget and Management, and the Fiscal Research Division. Pursuant to the provisions of law, the Department is pleased to submit the attached report.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Karen Wade, Director of Policy, at [Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
Michael Leighs, on behalf of Devdutta  
3C33184820C14A9...  
Devdutta Sangvai  
Secretary



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

JOSH STEIN  
GOVERNOR

DEVDUTTA SANGVAI  
SECRETARY

April 1, 2026

**SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

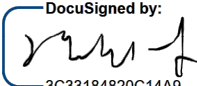
Ms. Kristin Walker  
State Budget Director  
Room 5200, Administration Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

Dear Director Walker:

Session Law 2023-134, Section 9D.1.(f) and NC General Statute 143B-168.10A require the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), to submit an annual report on the NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) program to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the House Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the Office of State Budget and Management, and the Fiscal Research Division. Pursuant to the provisions of law, the Department is pleased to submit the attached report.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Karen Wade, Director of Policy, at [Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
3C33184820C14A9...  
Michael Leighs, on behalf of  
Devdutta  
Devdutta Sangvai  
Secretary

**Annual NC Pre-K Report  
State Fiscal Year 2024-2025**

**Session Law 2023-134, Section 9D.1.(f)  
NC General Statute 143B-168.10A**



**Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations**

**Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health  
and Human Services**

**House Appropriations on Health and Human Services**

**Senate Appropriations on Health and Human Services**

**Office of State Budget and Management**

**Fiscal Research Division**

**By**

**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

**April 1, 2026**

## **Reporting Requirements**

Session Law 2023-134, Section 9D.1.(f) requires the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) to submit an annual report no later than March 15 of each year to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Office of State Budget and Management, and the Fiscal Research Division. The report shall include the following:

- (1) The number of children participating in the NC Pre-K Program by county.
- (2) The number of children participating in the NC Pre-K Program who have never been served in other early education programs such as childcare, public or private preschool, Head Start, Early Head Start, or early intervention programs.
- (3) The expected NC Pre-K expenditures for the programs and the source of the local contributions.
- (4) The results of an annual evaluation of the NC Pre-K Program.

**(1) The number of children participating in the NC Pre-K Program by county**

In Program Year 2024-2025 (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025), there were a total of 30,022 children participating in NC Pre-K programs. The table below shows the distribution by county.

**Number and Percent of Children Served by NC Pre-K by County (2024-2025)**

| County       | Number | Percent | County     | Number | Percent | County      | Number | Percent | County       | Number        | Percent       |
|--------------|--------|---------|------------|--------|---------|-------------|--------|---------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Alamance     | 511    | 1.70    | Cumberland | 1,506  | 5.02    | Johnston    | 379    | 1.26    | Randolph     | 401           | 1.34          |
| Alexander    | 70     | 0.23    | Currituck  | 49     | 0.16    | Jones       | 48     | 0.16    | Richmond     | 231           | 0.77          |
| Alleghany    | 73     | 0.24    | Dare       | 141    | 0.47    | Lee         | 329    | 1.10    | Robeson      | 673           | 2.24          |
| Anson        | 144    | 0.48    | Davidson   | 341    | 1.14    | Lenoir      | 157    | 0.52    | Rockingham   | 270           | 0.90          |
| Ashe         | 113    | 0.38    | Davie      | 174    | 0.58    | Lincoln     | 297    | 0.99    | Rowan        | 352           | 1.17          |
| Avery        | 60     | 0.20    | Duplin     | 352    | 1.17    | Macon       | 122    | 0.41    | Rutherford   | 278           | 0.93          |
| Beaufort     | 131    | 0.44    | Durham     | 599    | 2.00    | Madison     | 21     | 0.07    | Sampson      | 352           | 1.17          |
| Bertie       | 93     | 0.31    | Edgecombe  | 268    | 0.89    | Martin      | 96     | 0.32    | Scotland     | 295           | 0.98          |
| Bladen       | 193    | 0.64    | Forsyth    | 758    | 2.52    | McDowell    | 236    | 0.79    | Stanly       | 261           | 0.87          |
| Brunswick    | 261    | 0.87    | Franklin   | 171    | 0.57    | Mecklenburg | 1,726  | 5.75    | Stokes       | 147           | 0.49          |
| Buncombe     | 442    | 1.47    | Gaston     | 822    | 2.74    | Mitchell    | 23     | 0.08    | Surry        | 264           | 0.88          |
| Burke        | 410    | 1.37    | Gates      | 42     | 0.14    | Montgomery  | 204    | 0.68    | Swain        | 123           | 0.41          |
| Cabarrus     | 377    | 1.26    | Graham     | 47     | 0.16    | Moore       | 61     | 0.20    | Transylvania | 48            | 0.16          |
| Caldwell     | 302    | 1.01    | Granville  | 152    | 0.51    | Nash        | 320    | 1.07    | Tyrrell      | 19            | 0.06          |
| Camden       | 38     | 0.13    | Greene     | 106    | 0.35    | New Hanover | 588    | 1.96    | Union        | 388           | 1.29          |
| Carteret     | 228    | 0.76    | Guilford   | 2,384  | 7.94    | Northampton | 76     | 0.25    | Vance        | 261           | 0.87          |
| Caswell      | 72     | 0.24    | Halifax    | 254    | 0.85    | Onslow      | 735    | 2.45    | Wake         | 1,702         | 5.67          |
| Catawba      | 440    | 1.47    | Harnett    | 386    | 1.29    | Orange      | 274    | 0.91    | Warren       | 71            | 0.24          |
| Chatham      | 227    | 0.76    | Haywood    | 140    | 0.47    | Pamlico     | 53     | 0.18    | Washington   | 60            | 0.20          |
| Cherokee     | 75     | 0.25    | Henderson  | 205    | 0.68    | Pasquotank  | 173    | 0.58    | Watauga      | 92            | 0.31          |
| Chowan       | 93     | 0.31    | Hertford   | 134    | 0.45    | Pender      | 315    | 1.05    | Wayne        | 614           | 2.05          |
| Clay         | 44     | 0.15    | Hoke       | 315    | 1.05    | Perquimans  | 37     | 0.12    | Wilkes       | 352           | 1.17          |
| Cleveland    | 518    | 1.73    | Hyde       | 17     | 0.06    | Person      | 141    | 0.47    | Wilson       | 168           | 0.56          |
| Columbus     | 324    | 1.08    | Iredell    | 357    | 1.19    | Pitt        | 590    | 1.97    | Yadkin       | 152           | 0.51          |
| Craven       | 289    | 0.96    | Jackson    | 76     | 0.25    | Polk        | 86     | 0.29    | Yancey       | 37            | 0.12          |
| <b>Total</b> |        |         |            |        |         |             |        |         |              | <b>30,022</b> | <b>100.80</b> |

Note: Percentages are rounded to two decimal places. So, total percentage may exceed 100%

**(2) The number of children participating in the NC Pre-K Program who have never been served in other early education programs such as childcare, public or private preschool, Head Start, Early Head Start, or early intervention programs.**

Of the 30,022 children participating in a NC Pre-K in Program Year 2024-2025, 16,989 (56.7%) were never previously served in other early education programs.

**(3) The NC Pre-K expenditures for the programs and the source of local contribution:**

The SFY 2024-2025 average funds allocated for NC Pre-K Districts by source are listed below. Dollar values for in-kind resources are not included.

|                                      | <b>SFY 2024-2025</b> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Total direct service funds allocated | \$ 173,309,730       |
| Title I resources                    | \$ 152,213,305       |
| Smart Start resources                | \$ 94,858,267        |
| CACFP resources                      | \$ 56,891,671        |
| City county resources                | \$ 40,332,831        |
| Head Start resources                 | \$ 22,596,955        |
| Preschool Disability resources       | \$ 11,358,593        |
| Private provider resources           | \$ 5,109,647         |
| Subsidy resources                    | \$ 3,125,920         |

The source of local contributions as certified and reported by NC Pre-K contractors from July 1, 2024 through November 30, 2024 (part year) are noted in the chart below. Certification of expenditures of other resources in each NC Pre-K Program through November 30 is an annual reporting requirement. Certified Other Resources are reported to DCDEE by local contractors each year and should represent up to five (5) months of actual expenditures. These expenditures listed by funding source represent the amount of cash – not in-kind contributions – that has been spent during this time period from other sources to support the NC Pre-K Program. NC Pre-K subcontractors serve children for ten months. If a similar amount of funds were expended for the remaining five months of services, a total of approximately \$126 million of other resources may be expended.

| <b>Certified Other Resources</b>  | <b>Expenditures Reported through 11/30/24</b> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Head Start                        | \$ 16,763,145                                 |
| Title I                           | \$ 13,819,073                                 |
| Preschool Disabilities Program    | \$ 8,256,633                                  |
| Other                             | \$ 6,520,143                                  |
| Child and Adult Care Food Program | \$ 5,295,660                                  |
| Smart Start                       | \$ 5,093,103                                  |
| Local Appropriations              | \$ 4,064,879                                  |
| Private Providers                 | \$3,278,493                                   |
| <b>Total (Five months)</b>        | <b>\$ 63,091,129</b>                          |

#### **(4) The Results of the Annual Evaluation of the NC Pre-K Program<sup>1</sup>**

The Division of Child Development and Early Education contracts with Center for Urban Affairs & Community Services at NC State University to conduct an annual evaluation of the NC Pre-K Program. Program evaluation was completed using administrative and descriptive data from three main NC Pre-K databases. Findings from the evaluation are presented below. For SFY 2024-2025, the NC Pre-K Program served 30,022 children in 2,082 classrooms.

- More than half of NC Pre-K classrooms (about 52.8%) were in public school settings, about one-third (33.9%) were in private settings, and the remaining (13.3%) were in Head Start.
- Average class size was 17.8 children. Children attended an average of 132 days, representing 79% of the average days of operation (166) or 73% of the 180 intended days of operation<sup>2</sup>.
- Characteristics for children enrolled in NC Pre-K programs:
  - There were approximately equal proportions of boys and girls. About 49.8% (14,953) of the enrolled children were male, and 50.2% (15,069) were female.
  - The largest racial group was White or European-American (53% or 15,919), followed by Black or African-American (45.5% or 13,647). Smaller proportions of children were identified as Native American or Alaskan Native (5.8% or 1,727), Asian (3.8% or 1,015), and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.9% or 283). About 8% (2,385) of children selected multiple races. Since multiple race selections were permitted, total percentage exceeds 100%. Nearly a quarter (24% or 7,325) children identified as Latinx ethnicity.
  - About 78% (23,422) of the children attending NC Pre-K had at least one parent in the workforce.
  - Children served by the NC Pre-K Program primarily came from low-income families, with 78.6% (23,600) eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
  - For other eligibility factors, 16.8% (5,057) of children participating were identified as having limited English proficiency. Approximately 6% (1,697) of enrolled children had identified educational needs. About 9% (2,789) of children were reported as having been screened and evaluated for developmental disabilities. Fewer than 3% (730) of children were diagnosed with chronic health conditions. Additionally, about 5% (1,378) of children were from military families.
  - Information on children's prior placement indicated that over half (56.5% or 16,989) had never previously been served in any preschool setting and an additional 13.4% (4,042) were unserved at the time of enrollment.
- For the NC star-rated licenses (the Quality Rating and Improvement System or QRIS in NC), approximately 80% of the sites had a five-star rating and 17% had a four-star rating.
- About 93% of classrooms reported using Creative Curriculum and its companion

---

<sup>1</sup> Gregory, C, Sharma Gautam, D, O'Neal R, and Brannon, Y (2026). North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten Program Evaluation 2024-2025. Center for Urban Affairs and Community Services, NC State University

<sup>2</sup> Program requirements allow providers greater flexibility to implement instructional calendars that best meet the needs of their program while still maintaining minimum expectations for the amount of services provided to children. Sites meet a minimum number of 1,170 service hours (180 days x 6.5 hours) rather than holding them to a specific number of weeks or days. Accordingly, it's entirely possible for a program that provides NC Pre-K for a 7 hour day (instead of 6.5 hours) to only have 167 operational days in our system (1,170 hours/7 hours)

assessment (Teaching Strategies Gold or the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum). All classrooms reported using an approved developmental screening tool.

- Over 95% of the lead teachers in the NC Pre-K Program in 2024-2025 had at least a bachelor's degree or higher in both public school and private settings. About 98% of the lead teachers in public setting and about 90% in private setting had at least a bachelor's degree. Very few teachers reported having only a High School Diploma or GED. All lead teachers in public setting reported their education level while about 4% of private teachers did not report<sup>3</sup>.
- About 95% of the lead teachers in the NC Pre-K Program had a Birth-Kindergarten (B-K) license. Less than 4% of lead teachers in public setting, and about 6% in private setting reported some other kinds of license or credentials. Less than 1% of the lead teachers in both settings reported no licensure/credentials<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> Not reported

<sup>4</sup> Not reported; represents teachers who may still be completing required coursework or finalizing documentation