

## School Readiness Tax Credits Frequently Asked Questions for Staff and Directors

### 1. What are the School Readiness Tax Credits (SRTC) for Child Care Teachers and Directors?

The SRTCs are refundable credits that are provided directly to teachers and directors working in Type III centers based on their level on the [Staff Career Ladder](#) or [Director Career Ladder](#), as evaluated by Louisiana Pathways. The amount of the credit varies based on the level on the Staff Career Ladder or Director Career Ladder.

### 2. Where is my Staff/Director form for the School Readiness Tax Credit?

All directors and staff members working in Type III centers and who are actively registered with Louisiana Pathways and leveled on the Pathways Career Ladder at Teacher 1 or above, or Director 1 or above, will receive a Director and Staff member form by mail to the address registered with Louisiana Pathways. These forms will be mailed by January 31.

For questions regarding your level, please contact Louisiana Pathways at 1-800-245-8925. Your director can also request a Louisiana Pathways [Director's Report](#) to confirm your current level and address.

### 3. What records/certification will need to claim the credit?

If eligible, you will receive two copies of a R-10615 form (which will be sent to you by Pathways, no later than January 31 each year) that states the SRTC training/education level you have achieved. You should obtain all required information and signatures for both copies of the certificate.

In order to claim the tax credit, you must submit or maintain one original copy with your tax records, as required by the Secretary of the Department of Revenue in subsequent forms and instructions. The second original copy should be fully completed and mailed back to Louisiana Pathways, as described in the included directions. This may qualify you for increased tax credits in future years.

### 4. I filed my Staff/Director form. Where is my refund for School Readiness Tax Credit?

Please contact the Louisiana Department of Revenue for refund status at 225-219-0102 (individual) or 225-219-7462 (business) or visit [http://revenue.louisiana.gov/sections/individual/school\\_readiness.aspx](http://revenue.louisiana.gov/sections/individual/school_readiness.aspx)

### 5. How do I file for the School Readiness Tax Credit?

You must contact your tax preparer or the Louisiana Department of Revenue for information on filing taxes.

### 6. How does the tax year, academic school year performance profile results and center star rating align with effective dates?

The star ratings are based on CLASS® observations conducted in the previous academic year.

Tax Year	Academic Year Performance Profile	Star Rating Effective Dates
2021	2019-2020	January - December 2021
2020	2018-2019	January - December 2020
2019	2017-2018	January - December 2019
2018	2016-2017	January - December 2018

Please Note: Star ratings are only effective for 1 year. The star rating may increase, decrease or stay the same depending on the academic year performance profile results. [LouisianaSchools.com](http://LouisianaSchools.com) will always show the current year performance results, which is not the same as the tax year.

**7. Who is eligible for the Staff and Director School Readiness Tax Credit?**

In addition to meeting minimal Louisiana Pathways level requirements for [staff members](#) and [directors](#); staff and directors working in Type III centers are eligible if they have worked for at least six months of the calendar year (tax year). Staff members and directors must work for an average of 30 hours/week that participates in Louisiana’s Unified Quality Rating System and have either enrolled in Louisiana Pathways or have earned an Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate.

Beginning with 2018, all individuals who have earned the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate (ECAC) will be automatically, provisionally enrolled in the Louisiana Pathways Career Development System (unless the individual has otherwise opted out or has already enrolled).

**8. What are the four levels and how much is the School Readiness Tax Credit?**

The SRTC for each level are as follows:

<b>SRTC Levels</b> (requirements for the levels can be found on Louisiana Pathways)	Tax Credit amount in 2018	Tax Credit amount for 2019	Increase	<b>Tax Credit amount for 2020</b>
<b>Director 1/ Early Learning Center Teacher 1</b>	\$1,715	\$1,756	\$31.61	<b>\$1,788</b>
<b>Director 2/ Early Learning Center Teacher 2</b>	\$2,286	\$2,341	\$42.14	<b>\$2,383</b>
<b>Director 3/ Early Learning Center Teacher 3</b>	\$2,857	\$2,926	\$52.67	<b>\$2,979</b>
<b>Director 4/ Early Learning Center Teacher 4</b>	\$3,429	\$3,511	\$63.20	<b>\$3,574</b>

Note: These tax credit amounts are adjusted annually for each calendar year by the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index United States city average for all urban consumers (CPI-U), as prepared by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, as determined by the secretary of the Department of Revenue on December first of the preceding calendar year.

**9. Does the number of stars the center has earned impact the amount of the SRTC for staff?**

No, the number of stars a center has earned will not impact how much its staff receives in tax credits. If the center is participating in the unified rating system then the teachers are eligible to apply for the SRTC. Eligible teachers must meet all of the educational and employment requirements (Level I – IV), see [Staff Career Ladder](#) for more details.

**10. Does the number of stars the center has earned impact the amount of the SRTC for directors?**

For the 2017 tax year, the number of stars a center earned (as long as they had at least 1 star) did not impact the level of tax credit a director could qualify for. As long as the center is participating in the unified rating system, then the directors are eligible to apply for the SRTC. Eligible directors must meet all of the educational and employment requirements (Level I – IV).

Beginning with the 2018 tax year, directors who work at 3 star, 4 star, or 5 star centers may be able to qualify for higher tax credit levels. These additions for the 2018 tax year will not result in the reduction of any director’s current tax credit eligible level although directors still need to meet the professional active requirements to maintain their current tax credit eligible levels. Directors will be able to qualify based on their current educational requirements and professional activity requirements or their center’s star rating and professional activity requirements and will be awarded the highest tax credit level for which they qualify. For specific qualifications, see [Director Career Ladder](#).

**11. What is a tax credit, and how is it different from a tax deduction?**

A tax credit reduces the taxes paid, dollar-for-dollar. A tax deduction lowers taxable income. A tax credit is generally more valuable to a taxpayer than a tax deduction of the same amount. For example, for a taxpayer in the 20-percent tax bracket, the value of a \$100 tax deduction is 20 percent (\$20). But the value of the same amount as a tax credit is 100 percent, or in this example, the full \$100. So, if you owe \$5,000 in taxes but have a \$1,000 tax credit, then your final tax bill will be \$4,000. However, if you had a \$1,000 tax deduction, and were in the 15% tax bracket, then your final tax bill would be \$4,850 (as you save \$150 which is 15% of \$1,000).

**12. What is a refundable tax credit?**

A 'refundable' tax credit is one that is available to a taxpayer even if they do not owe taxes. For example, a taxpayer who is eligible for a nonrefundable tax credit worth \$500 and who owes only \$100 in taxes can only claim \$100 of the credit. If the same tax credit were refundable, the taxpayer could claim the full \$500. That's right; they would receive a check for the difference. Because the SRTC is refundable, eligible teachers and directors who do not owe any taxes will still receive an income tax refund. For example, if you meet the requirements for an Early Learning Center Teacher Level 1, then you qualify for \$1,715. Let's assume that, after you do your 2019 taxes, you are eligible for a refund of \$100. After the SRTC is applied, you will actually get a refund check of \$1,815.

**13. Can I qualify for the credit if I don't pay taxes?**

Yes, the SRTC is refundable. This means that even if you do not owe any taxes you will receive all of the SRTC to which you are eligible.

**14. Do I have to file an income tax return in order to receive the credit?**

Yes, in order to claim this credit you will have to file a Louisiana state income tax return, even if you do not owe any taxes. On or before January 31st of each year, you will receive a certificate from Pathways that states the level of training and education you have achieved (Level I-IV). You must submit or maintain the certificate as required by the Secretary of the Department of Revenue in subsequent forms and instructions. [Note: it is important to fill out both a federal and state tax form – even if you do not owe any taxes – because you might be eligible for other refundable tax credits, such as the earned income tax credit, which is a refundable tax credit at both the federal and state level for taxpayers in certain income brackets, even if taxes are not due.]

**15. Can I qualify for the tax if I work for a Type I or Type II Center?**

No, only Type III centers are allowed to participate.

**16. Where can I obtain certification of the rating for my child care center?**

For previous SRTC star ratings visit the [link](#), locate School Readiness Tax Credits at the bottom of the page. Under the School Readiness Tax Credit box locate the year, and center star rating level. Click the link and locate your center in the list.

\*[LouisianaSchools.com](http://LouisianaSchools.com) will always show the current year performance results, which is not the same as the tax year. You can also visit the [link](#) and find your child care center and its 2020 star rating.

**17. How can I enroll in Louisiana Pathways? If I have enrolled in Louisiana Pathways, where can I obtain a copy of my credentials?**

You can find information about Louisiana Pathways at their website (<http://pathways.nsula.edu/career-development/>) or by calling (800) 245-8925 to register or to verify your level and request the needed documentation.

**18. If I want to earn my CDA or take courses or clock hours, is there financial assistance available?**

Yes, there is a scholarship program through Louisiana Pathways for both a CDA and college courses. Contact Louisiana Pathways or call (800) 245-8925 for more information.

**Additional Guidance for SRTC's:**

- [SRTC Guidance](#)
- [SRTC - FAQs for Businesses](#)
- [SRTC - FAQs for Child Care Providers](#)
- [SRTC - FAQs for Parents and Families](#)