



## Bright Horizons Launches Free College Tuition Program for Early Educators

July 25, 2018

*Program is first-of-its-kind effort to professionalize the field and support education careers*

WATERTOWN, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Jul. 25, 2018-- Bright Horizons® (NYSE: BFAM) today launched a program that will provide free college tuition for all full-time employees in the company's early education centers and preschools. The program is the first of its kind in the education field and will allow employees to earn an associate and bachelor's degree in early childhood education for free. Bright Horizons employees taking advantage of the program will not have to pay for any expenses out of pocket, including tuition, fees and books. And unlike a traditional tuition reimbursement program, employees will not need to find a way to pay for the expenses up front.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20180725005555/en/>



Bright Horizons Launches Free College Tuition Program for Early Educators (Photo: Business Wire).

"We are rooted in the belief that everyone at every age deserves a great education," said Bright Horizons CEO Stephen Kramer. "Our goal has always been to professionalize the field and create an environment for teachers where they can build a lifelong career. We recognized that for many, the cost of education has been a barrier to pursuing their goals. This program will give teachers at every level and stage the ability to continue their education, grow

their careers and ultimately improve the quality of education for the youngest children across North America."

Employees are eligible for the *Early Education Degree Achievement Plan* as soon as their first day working at any Bright Horizons child care and early education center, providing a direct path for a college degree and a lifelong professional career in early education. Through this benefit, Bright Horizons hopes to remove all barriers to continued education for its employees who are committed to careers in early education as well as for those who are hoping to enter the field.

By offering this program, the company is also continuing its mission to raise the bar for quality in the field. Studies have shown that the first five years of a child's life are the most critical in human development, and the brain's capacity for change decreases as people age. The first three years are especially crucial as the brain is the most impressionable, forming more than one million new neural connections every second. Studies also show that quality early education is vital in helping to guide a child's social, physical, emotional and cognitive development.

In response to some of this research and quality standards established by organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), some city and state child care licensing agencies have increased education requirements for teachers in child care settings. At the same time, the number of people pursuing education degrees has declined from 21.6 percent in 1975 to 7.6 percent according to the U.S. Census Bureau<sup>1</sup>. And that number is even lower for those specializing in early childhood education. According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), early education degrees account for less than three percent of college degrees. As one of the largest employers in the field, Bright Horizons is hoping to broaden opportunities for those committed to the education of young children and raise the standard for early education.

"Collectively, nearly 20,000 Bright Horizons teachers and staff care for more than 100,000 children around the world, and we recognize the very important role they play in helping children to develop a love of learning," said Kramer. "We believe this program is not only important for our teachers and their careers but for the early childhood field as a whole. We believe that this program creates a path for all of those who are committed to the critically important work of educating young children."

Employees in Bright Horizons' *Early Education Degree Achievement Plan* can enroll in programs with one of four institutions for higher education – Ashford University, Northampton Community College, Rasmussen College and Walden University.

"Northampton Community College is excited to partner with Bright Horizons to offer their employees a great start to their academic career. Research in the field of early childhood education continues to document the need for our youngest children to have highly qualified teachers," said Dr. Carolyn Bortz, Vice President, Academic Affairs at Northampton Community College. "This initiative, to make enrolling and paying for college easier for employees recognizes the value of enhancing the knowledge and skills of early education practitioners as a tool to increase the quality of care and education provided to children across our country. Northampton's history of excellence in preparing early childhood teachers is a perfect match for this endeavor."

"This is the most important investment that Bright Horizons can make," said NAEYC CEO Rhian Evans Allvin. "Affording early childhood educators the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education is a commitment directly to the young children and families that Bright Horizons serves. After all, effective early childhood educators and program administrators are the linchpin to high quality early learning programs."

In addition to covering tuition and expenses, individuals who sign up for this benefit will have the support of an education advisor who will help them determine the right program to both meet their career goals and fit within their personal lives. The *Early Education Degree Achievement Plan* will be

administered through EdAssist, provider of tuition assistance and student loan repayment benefits and a division of Bright Horizons.

Bright Horizons has been offering employees a free Child Development Associate (CDA) credential for employees since 2007. The CDA, together with the *Early Education Degree Achievement Plan*, offers women and men interested careers in early education a path to a full college degree, even straight out of high school, with no financial barriers.

**About Bright Horizons®**

Bright Horizons Family Solutions® is a leading provider of high-quality child care, early education and other services designed to help employers and families better address the challenges of work and family life. The company provides full service center-based child care, back-up dependent care and educational advisory services to more than 1,100 clients across the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada and India, including more than 150 Fortune 500 companies and more than 80 of Working Mother magazine's 2017 "100 Best Companies for Working Mothers." Bright Horizons has been recognized 17 times as one of Fortune magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For" and is one of the U.K. and Netherlands' Best Workplaces as designated by the Great Place to Work® Institute. Bright Horizons is headquartered in Watertown, MA. The company's web site is located at [www.brighthorizons.com](http://www.brighthorizons.com).

<sup>1</sup><https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html>

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