

Kentucky's Early Childhood Professional Development Framework

THE KENTUCKY EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

December 2025

In 2002, Kentucky launched a plan for the development of a statewide Professional Development Framework (Townley & Newberry, 2011) that included key components to address the needs for education, training, and credentialing of early care, intervention, and education professionals in Kentucky. After months of collaboration, including input from numerous stakeholders across the state, this plan was updated in 2011.

The decision to revise the Kentucky EC PD Framework in 2025 was identified as a priority within the state's Preschool Development Grant (PDG), aligning with its goal to strengthen and modernize early childhood systems. In accordance with this priority, updated revisions to the framework were submitted to and approved by the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) in December 2025.

Based on the PDG Strategy, a statewide committee worked from April 2025 through August 2025 to develop updates.

This document was developed through the Governor's Office of Early Childhood in collaboration with the Division of Child Care, Council for Post-Secondary Education, Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance, Kentucky Department of Education, Child Care Aware of Kentucky, Kentucky Head Start Association, and Kentucky Community and Technical College System. Some information was adapted from the original Kentucky EC PD Framework Plan (Townley & Newberry, 2011).

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INTRODUCTION

This document provides an overview of the Kentucky Early Childhood Professional Development (PD) Framework that includes existing programs and supports. All elements of the PD Framework have been endorsed by the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) Joint Standards Committee. The **Kentucky Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)**, established by statute (KRS 200.131), serves as the state's coordinating and advisory body on early childhood policy. Kentucky's ECAC provides collaborative leadership and direction for the Commonwealth of Kentucky by providing a comprehensive and sustainable prenatal to age five early childhood system that will ensure a strong foundation for all children, families, and communities.

Working in partnership with its support office, the **Governor's Office of Early Childhood**, the ECAC brings together more than 30 agencies and programs, including the Cabinet for Health and Family Services: Division of Child Care, the Kentucky Head Start Collaboration Office, and the Kentucky Department of Education. By convening state and local stakeholders, the Council ensures that early childhood programs and services are coordinated, collaborative, and responsive to the needs of children and families across the commonwealth.

The overall purpose of professional development is to support the professional growth and development of those working with young children and families, as they invest in their careers. Therefore, this definition of professional development recognizes three distinct but integrated components: 1) structured educational experiences, 2) structured technical assistance and support, and 3) self-guided learning.

Defining and outlining the critical components of professional development is the first step in helping the early care, intervention, and education system identify key outcomes to be achieved. High quality professional development experiences should be designed to assist:

- all early care, intervention, and education staff being competent, confident, highly qualified, and able to implement practices consistently and with a high degree of fidelity;
- consistency in the use of high quality practices and programming across the state;
- continuous quality improvement, with staff who are able to manage change and effectively use available resources;
- high quality services to children and families; and
- measurable improvements in outcomes for children.

To help reach these outcomes, it is important that opportunities exist for all staff to access professional development, including support staff who may work with children and families (e.g., teacher assistant or aide/paraprofessional, bus/van drivers, kitchen staff, therapists, directors, family service workers). It also is important to ensure that those providing professional development opportunities use a wide variety of strategies and techniques that match the learner's needs.

The Kentucky Early Childhood Professional Development Framework includes:

- Early Childhood Core Content that describes what early childhood professionals should know and be able to do.
- Credentials, degrees, and apprenticeships for early care, intervention and education professionals.
- A seamless Career Pathway to support professionals in building knowledge and competence from level to level.
- The provision of support services or technical assistance to help staff implement and sustain skills and practices in the work environment.
- Articulation agreements that support the transfer of credit across education and training.
- A scholarship program at the college and non-college level for early childhood professionals.
- A State-wide Professional Development and Training Registry, that tracks training hours, credentials, and compliance, supporting both individual career growth and the state's quality improvement goals.

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KENTUCKY CORE CONTENT STANDARDS

Through the Kentucky Preschool Development Grant (PDG), the state prioritized the redesign of the Core Content for Early Childhood Education to ensure it reflects current research, best practices, and the evolving needs of young children and educators. This initiative aimed to modernize the foundational knowledge and competencies expected of early care and education professionals across all career levels.

The Kentucky Core Content Standards are a set of guidelines that define what early childhood educators in Kentucky should know and be able to do to support the development, learning, and well-being of young children. These standards are designed to ensure quality care and education for children from birth through age 5, and they help guide professional development, training, and evaluation of early childhood professionals across the state.

The standards were developed using existing professional resources that put forth standards (i.e., Kentucky Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education programs, Child Development Associate functional area competency standards, Head Start, Family Child Care, American Public Health, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children). These standards align with national best practices and support Kentucky's goals for improving the quality of early childhood education through professional competency, accountability, and development.

The Core Content Standards encompass seven core competency areas in early childhood education, each structured across five progressive levels of mastery. These standards serve as a framework for individuals designing early childhood education and training programs, allowing them to align program content with the appropriate skill levels and targeted competency outcomes for participants.

LEVELS OF CORE CONTENT STANDARDS

Professionals in early care, intervention, and education develop greater competence over time through hands-on experience and ongoing professional development. This growing expertise covers multiple content areas and skill levels. The competencies outlined in this document are structured across five progressive levels, ranging from foundational to advanced skills. Each level builds upon the previous one, creating a cumulative progression of knowledge and ability. These competencies are grounded in early childhood literature and are largely adapted from similar frameworks used in other states.

The levels of competencies are not an award or certificate, but may correlate with existing certificates or awards. Each level assumes greater knowledge and skill than previous levels; however, an individual level should not be seen as limited to a particular job or position of employment.

Table 1. Early Childhood Professional Standards Level Descriptions

Level I	Knowledge & skills across all seven content areas for professionals at the initial level, which includes entry into the field & a Commonwealth Child Care Credential.
Level II	Knowledge & skills across all seven content areas for professionals with a Child Development Associate Credential.
Level III	Knowledge & skills across all content areas for professionals from CDA to Associate degree.
Level IV	Knowledge & skills across all content areas for professionals with a Bachelor degree.
Level V	Knowledge & skills across all content areas for professionals above a Bachelor degree.

Level I. Early childhood practitioners with a high school diploma or GED must demonstrate social skills such as courtesy, respect, and the appreciation for diverse ethnicities, cultures, ideas, and viewpoints. They must also demonstrate literacy skills that enable them to expressively read books appropriate for young children through age five; use acceptable grammar to communicate with children, staff, and parents; and, legibly write notes on children's developmental skills. They must also: be able to verbalize their awareness of physical and biological processes in the natural environment; display attitudes of wondering, investigation, and respect for the ecology of the natural world and enjoy partnering with children in experiencing all five senses and searching for more information; demonstrate that they have the basic mathematical and spatial knowledge to solve practical problems while working with children and other adults; demonstrate fundamental, coordinated small and large muscle skills in physical movements and games; and demonstrate a practical understanding of the principles of democracy, justice, and fair play by using techniques of positive guidance, conflict management, and peacemaking for children, other staff, and the community.

Level II& III. At this level, practitioners may become lead teachers or administrators. They must: demonstrate increased abilities to reason, think critically and reflectively, discern relationships between areas of knowledge, and analyze the nature of physical and social problems; show evidence of basic computer literacy and internet search skills; possess literacy, speaking, interpersonal, and leadership skills sufficient to effectively conduct parent meetings, relate to a board of directors, write descriptive newsletters, and construct detailed curriculum plans that include individual children's developmental goals; and, master the grammatical and conversational rudiments of one other language, which assists early childhood educators in becoming aware of the rich cultures and languages of the children and families enrolled in their

programs. Spanish is especially recommended because of the need to communicate effectively with Kentucky's rapidly increasing Hispanic populations.

Levels IV&V. At these levels, practitioners may increase their general knowledge through required and elective courses according to their interests and needs. In addition to exploring human development theories, anthropology, sociology, statistics, and consumer issues, they may select advanced studies in foreign languages, computer technology, psychology, philosophy, history, and the arts and sciences. Increased experience and leadership in the early childhood field may lead to higher levels of competence in reasoning, critical and reflective thinking, mathematics, and the physical or biological sciences.

SUBJECT AREAS COVERED

Child Growth and Development

Early childhood (EC) and school-age youth development (SAYD) professionals are grounded in an understanding of the development of all children regardless of age (birth through 12) across developmental domains (physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and linguistic)

- 1a. They understand each child as an individual with unique developmental variations.
- 1b. They understand that children learn and develop within relationships and within multiple abilities and contexts, including families, cultures, languages, communities, and society.
- 1c. They use this multidimensional knowledge to make evidence-based decisions about how to carry out their responsibilities.

Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Early childhood (EC) and school-age youth development (SAYD) professionals provide a safe and healthy environment.

- 2a. They must adhere to federal and state health, safety, and nutrition regulations, including special education standards and regulations.
- 2b. They promote both physical and mental well-being to keep adults and children healthy, safe and supported to reduce risks in the environment.

Professional Development / Professionalism

Early childhood (EC) and school-age youth development (SAYD) professionals identify, model, and participate as members of the early childhood profession.

- 3a. They serve as informed advocates for children, families, and the early childhood and school-age youth development profession.
- 3b. They know and follow the applicable national codes of ethics.
- 3c. They have professional skills which include competency in formal and informal verbal and written communication and emerging technology that effectively support their relationships and work with children, families, and colleagues.
- 3d. Professional Development plans are collaboratively created and updated at least annually and as needed for continuous professional growth specific to their individual

needs.

3e. They engage in continuous, collaborative learning to inform teaching practices that are responsive to the learning needs of each child.

3f. They develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily work with children as members of the early childhood and school-age youth development profession.

Learning Environments and Curriculum

Early childhood (EC) and school-age youth development (SAYD) professionals know that developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate environments and curricula have a positive impact on the whole child.

4a. They create nurturing, engaging, accessible indoor and outdoor environments, which are inquiry-based and play-based enabling children to thrive.

4b. They know and demonstrate that positive, caring, supportive relationships between peers and nurturing adults are the foundation for their work with children.

4c. They use varied approaches to positive guidance strategies for individual children and groups to help children learn skills for self-regulation, resolving problems, developing empathy and positive attitudes about learning.

4d. They plan individualized, diverse activities and experiences to aid children's development across applicable learning standards and developmental milestones.

4e. They link observation and documentation to curriculum planning to meet the needs of each individual child.

4f. They select and implement an evidenced-based curriculum that is culturally and linguistically responsive to the needs and abilities of the children and families they serve.

Child Assessment

Ongoing assessment and observation help early childhood (EC) and school-age youth development (SAYD) professionals help evaluate all areas of a child's growth and development.

5a. They ensure children (birth through 5) receive a developmental screening and use results to determine the need for further evaluation and interventions.

5b. They observe, assess, interpret, and document children's skills, behaviors, and abilities.

5c. They use screening and assessment (birth through five) approaches and tools that are ethically grounded and developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child.

5d. They build collaborative partnerships with families and professional colleagues around screening and assessment.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Assessment:** The ongoing process of gathering and interpreting information about a child's development, skills, and learning. Assessments help educators make informed decisions about instruction, support, and goals for individual children and groups.
- **Benchmark:** A specific, measurable skill or concept that falls under a broader Standard
- **Child Development Associate (CDA):** A national credential for early childhood professionals, emphasizing competencies in health, safety, relationships, learning environments, professionalism, and communication.
- **Collaborative Effort:** Educators, families, healthcare providers, and community organizations working together to support the developmental needs of young children, recognizing that no single system can meet all needs alone.
- **Commonwealth Child Care Credential (CCCC):** Kentucky's entry-level credential awarded after completing 60 hours of approved training
- **Comprehensive Services:** Integrated supports that address the full range of a young child's needs—health, nutrition, early learning, mental health, family support, and special services—all working together for holistic development.
- **Community Resources:** Local services and organizations that support children and families, such as health clinics, libraries, food banks, mental health services, and early intervention programs. Early educators often connect families to these resources as part of holistic care.
- **Continuity of Care:** Maintaining consistent relationships with caregivers and routines over time, which is critical for infants and young children to develop secure attachments and emotional well-being.
- **Culturally Diverse:** Acknowledges the variety of culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and ability—important in ensuring inclusive and responsive educational environments
- **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive:** Practices that recognize, respect, and incorporate the cultural backgrounds, home languages, and traditions of the children and families served. These practices promote equity, inclusion, and meaningful learning experiences for all children
- **Developmental Continuum:** A sequence that outlines the progression of a child's skills and performance in relation to a Benchmark
- **Developmental Domain:** An area of development (e.g., Approaches to Learning, Communication, Motor Development, Social Emotional, etc.) used to organize learning standards
- **Developmental Milestones:** Developmental milestones are key skills or abilities that most children achieve by a certain age as they grow and develop. These milestones cover areas such as physical, cognitive, social-emotional, language, and self-help skills. They serve as general guidelines to help parents and early care professionals track a child's growth and identify any areas where additional support may be needed.
- **Developmental Screening:** A standardized tool used to identify children who may be at risk for developmental delays. Screenings help determine whether further evaluation or support services are needed and are often used as an early intervention strategy.
- **Director's Credential:** Awarded to directors after 12 credit hours of approved higher education coursework
- **Documentation:** The process of recording and collecting evidence of children's learning and development, often through notes, photos, work samples, or checklists.

Documentation helps educators track progress, plan curriculum, and communicate with families.

- **Early Childhood Standards:** developmental domains (e.g., cognitive, social–emotional, motor, language) to support school readiness
- **ECE-COLT:** The statewide system that tracks approved early childhood training hours and records for professionals
- **Emerging Technology:** As technology advances and changes it is important to stay knowledgeable about new technology that can be used as a support for your job and communication.
- **Ethically Grounded:** Acting in ways that are guided by a clear set of professional values and moral principles, especially those found in a code of ethics. For early childhood educators, this means making decisions that prioritize children's well-being, respect families, and uphold professional integrity.
- **Evaluate:** To carefully examine and judge the quality, effectiveness, or value of a program, activity, or child's progress. In early education, evaluation may apply to teaching strategies, curriculum, or child outcomes based on observation and assessment data.
- **Evidence-based:** Practices and strategies that are backed by current and best available research around a specific topic.
- **Evidence-Based Curriculum:** A curriculum that is grounded in research and proven to be effective in supporting children's learning and development. It includes developmentally appropriate content and teaching strategies that align with child development theories and standards.
- **Family-Centered Services:** Approaches that allow families to determine the services and resources for their children, recognizing the family's role as key decision-makers.
- **Formal and Informal verbal and written communication:** Includes verbally talking, and communicating via text, email, written communication with children, families, and partners.
- **Informed Advocates:** Teachers are informed about current best practices and strategies for children and families, and appropriately speak for the best practices for their profession.
- **Inquiry-based Learning:** Learning that uses children's natural curiosity to encourage children to question, explore, problem-solve by making real observations in their experiences.
- **Kentucky Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC):** The body that approves early childhood credentials and supports policy and standards for early childhood care
- **Multidimensional Knowledge:** Professionals can take into consideration the different aspects of an individual child's life including; culture, language, families, abilities, contexts
- **National Codes of Ethics:** All professions have a code of ethics to ensure that the core values, responsibilities, and expected ethical conduct of early childhood educators are clearly defined and upheld.. It serves as a guiding framework for decision-making and professional behavior in early childhood settings.
- **Observation / Observe:** The intentional process of watching, listening, and recording children's behaviors, interactions, and development in a natural setting. Observation helps educators understand each child's needs, interests, and progress, and informs planning and assessment.
- **Ongoing Monitoring:** Regular observation and assessment of a child's developmental milestones, learning progress, and well-being, used to identify strengths, address delays early, and inform individualized support.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborative relationships between educators, families, community

members, and organizations that support the healthy development and learning of young children. These partnerships are built on mutual respect, communication, and shared goals.

- **Play-based learning:** Learning that uses play to help children develop skills that support their social, physical and cognitive development. Play-based uses play based experience as learning experiences.
- **Positive Guidance:** A quality practice to guide children to develop healthy self-esteem, respect, and self-regulation skills. Positive guidance encourages positive reinforcement, strength-based language and positive choices to reinforce positive behavior.
- **Professionalism:** The conduct, behavior, and attitude expected of someone in a professional role. In early care and education, professionalism includes ethical practice, continuous learning, respectful communication, reliability, and a commitment to high-quality care.
- **Professional Colleagues:** Other individuals working in the early care and education field, including teachers, assistants, specialists, and administrators. Respectful and supportive relationships with professional colleagues are essential for maintaining a positive work environment and ensuring high-quality care.
- **Professional Development Plans:** A plan of professional development including required training, ongoing education, and skill-building activities designed to enhance the knowledge, competencies, and practices of early care and education professionals. These plans support career growth, ensure compliance with regulatory standards, and promote high-quality learning environments for children.
- **Primary Influence:** The most significant people or environments shaping a child's early development—typically parents, family members, and early childhood educators who model behavior, language, and emotional responses.
- **Reciprocal Relationships:** Two-way, trusting relationships between children and caregivers/educators where both parties respond to and influence each other. This builds emotional security and supports social-emotional growth.
- **Recommended Practices:** Evidence-based strategies and methods that are widely recognized as effective in supporting children's development and learning. These practices are typically grounded in research and endorsed by professional organizations (e.g., NAEYC, DEC).
- **School Age Youth Development Professional:** In Kentucky, the term "School Age Youth Development" is used to describe a provider or teacher that serves children 6 years of age or older and attends kindergarten, elementary or secondary school. This also includes out of school time providers and teachers.
- **School Readiness:** The condition in which a child is prepared to benefit from early learning, defined across five developmental categories: approaches to learning, health, language, social–emotional, and cognitive/general knowledge
- **Seamless Transitions:** Supporting children and families as they move between settings (e.g., home to child care, infant room to toddler classroom, preschool to kindergarten), minimizing stress and ensuring consistency in care and expectations.
- **Self-regulation:** The ability of early care and education professionals to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in a way that promotes positive interactions, responsive caregiving, and effective teaching. Self-regulation supports maintaining composure under stress, modeling appropriate behavior for children, and creating a calm, predictable learning environment.
- **Staff Evaluation:** A systematic process for assessing the performance, strengths, and areas for improvement of early childhood educators and staff. It often includes observations, feedback, self-reflection, and goal setting to support professional growth

and program quality.

- **Trainer Credential:** Issuance for individuals qualified to provide professional development training to early care and education professionals

Kentucky Early Care and Education Professional Career Pathway

As part of the Kentucky Preschool Development Grant (PDG) strategy, the state carried out a comprehensive effort to redesign the Kentucky Career Lattice in order to create a clearer, more equitable pathway for professionals in the field.

The 2025 revised Kentucky Early Care and Education Professional Career Pathway, formerly known as the Kentucky Career Lattice, provides a clearly defined framework to support the professional growth and advancement of individuals working in early childhood education. Designed to recognize experience, education, and specialized credentials, the pathway includes five progressive levels—from entry-level roles to doctoral-level professionals. Each level outlines the necessary qualifications, including degrees, certifications, and microcredentials, helping educators understand the steps needed to advance their careers. This updated structure ensures alignment with state standards and promotes high-quality care and education for young children across Kentucky.

For an interactive version, please visit <https://kyecac.ky.gov/career-pathway>

Kentucky

Early Care & Education Professional Career Pathway

LEVEL 1

1.1

State-issued Badge (i.e. Infant/Toddler, School-Age) OR 2 years of experience*

1.2

KCTCS Early Childhood Entry Level Certificate OR Commonwealth Child Care Credential

1.3

State-issued Microcredential - Level 1 (i.e. Infant/Toddler, School-Age)

LEVEL 2

2.1

KCTCS Early Childhood Administrator Certificate OR Kentucky Director's Credential OR KCTCS Early Childhood Educator Certificate OR 10 years of experience*

2.2

Child Development Associate (i.e. Infant/Toddler, Preschool, Birth-Five, Family Child Care, Home-Visitor, Military School-Age) OR State-issued Microcredential-Level 2 OR KCTCS School-Age Child Care Certificate

2.3

Early Childhood Development Specialist Journey Worker Credential OR KCTCS Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education Technical Studies Certificate

LEVEL 3

3.1

Associate's Degree in non-related field and 10 years of experience* OR Early Childhood Educator Journey Worker Credential OR Early Childhood Student Support Specialist OR KCTCS Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education Diploma OR Associate Montessori Infant-Toddler Certification Credential OR Associate Montessori Early Childhood Certification Credential OR 20 years of experience*

3.2

Associate's Degree in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education OR Associate's Degree in related field and 1 year of experience* OR Associate's Degree in non-related field and 3 years of experience or any Level 2 requirements OR Early Childhood Administrator Director Journey Worker Credential

3.3

State-issued Microcredential-Level 3: Option A OR Associate's Degree and Early Childhood Administrator Director Journey Worker Credential

LEVEL 4

4.1

Bachelor's Degree in non-related field and 10 years of experience* OR Full Montessori Infant-Toddler Certification Credential OR Full Montessori Early Childhood Certification Credential

4.2

Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (teaching certification and non-teaching certification) OR Bachelor's Degree with Alternative Certification (i.e. Option 9) OR Bachelor's Degree in related field and 1 year of experience* OR Bachelor's Degree in non-related field and 3 years of experience or any Level 2 requirements

4.3

Bachelor's Degree and Early Childhood Administrator Director Journey Worker Credential OR State-issued Microcredential - Level 3: Option B

LEVEL 5

5.1

Master's Degree in non-related field and 10 years of experience*

5.2

Master's Degree in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education OR Master's Degree with Alternative Certification (i.e. Option 6 or Proficiency Evaluation) OR Master's Degree in related field and 1 year of experience* OR Master's Degree in non-related field and 3 years of experience or any Level 2 requirements OR Master's Degree and Early Childhood Administrator Director Journey Worker Credential

5.3

Doctoral Degree in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education OR Doctoral Degree in related field and 1 year of experience*



*Experience must be in a licensed child care program, Head Start program, after-school program, or state-funded preschool. You may be asked to have employment experience verified.
 **The levels within the early childhood career pathway are designed to be flexible, allowing individuals to progress non-linearly based on experience, education, and demonstrated competencies.
 For more information about the career pathway, visit <https://kyecac.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx>

CREDENTIALS

Kentucky's Early Childhood Professional Development Framework offers multiple pathways for early childhood professionals to earn credentials. Professionals can enter the pathway at any point and progress as their needs and goals guide their progress, with the understanding that some levels may be skipped depending on prior experience, education, or professional goals. Each credential represents a distinct entry and exit point and serves as a building block toward the next level of competency and professional recognition.

In addition to the national Child Development Associate (CDA), which Kentucky recognizes, the state offers several early childhood credentials. These credentials acknowledge that different roles within the early childhood field require different competencies and skill sets. Credentials are offered through college and non-college classes, ensuring that early childhood professionals have access to structured, approved learning opportunities appropriate to their needs.

Scholarships may be obtained through the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) Early Childhood Development Scholarship and the Division of Child Care (DCC) Non-College Scholarship, subject to availability.

Recognized early childhood credentials in Kentucky include:

- Infant-Toddler Badge
- School-Age Youth Development Badge
- Infant-Toddler Microcredential
- School-Age Youth Development Microcredential
- Commonwealth Child Care Credential
- Child Development Associate (CDA)
- Director's Credential
- Early Care and Education Trainer's Credential

Table 2. Kentucky Early Childhood Credentials at a Glance

Credential	Initial Requirements	Ongoing Requirements
Commonwealth Child Care Credential (DCC)	14 hours in Child Growth & Development, 15 hours in Learning Environments, Curriculum & Social Emotional Development, 9 hours in Health, Safety & Nutrition, 7 hours in Family & Community Partnerships, 4 hours in Child Assessment, 6 hours in Professional Development/Professionalism, and 5 hours in Program Management & Evaluation. Totalling 60 hours of approved instruction.	Annual Renewal from date of credential authorization; must complete an additional 15 hours of training, including 12 hours of child development and either 3 additional clock hours in child development training approved by the cabinet, pursuant to KRS 199.896(17) or 1 college credit

Director's Credential (DCC)	Twelve (12) college credit hours are required in the following areas: local, state, and federal regulations and laws; ethics; programming for families and children; supervision and staff development; health and safety; financial management and marketing; and community collaboration and resource management from an approved institution.	
Infant-Toddler Credential (DCC)	Level 1: Associate – Requires 60 hours of instruction in infant-toddler development and care topics within the past 2 years OR 60 hours of instruction in infant-toddler topics completed as part of a secondary education program. Level 2: Professional – Requires 120 hours of instructed infant-toddler content within 2 years and 480 hours of work or volunteer experience within the past 3 years, OR a current Infant-Toddler CDA or Family Child Care CDA (experience waived). Level 3: Leader – Requires an Associate or Bachelor's degree in early care/education with at least 9 credit hours in infant-toddler topics, OR a Bachelor's degree in another field with 60 hours of approved infant-toddler training in the past 2 years, plus 480 hours of relevant experience within the past 3 years.	3-Year Renewal: Submit a completed renewal application; complete 45 hours of cabinet-approved training or college coursework in relevant topics (infant-toddler or school-aged youth development); provide a resume documenting 480 hours of work or volunteer experience with children in the past three years; hold current Pediatric CPR and First Aid and Pediatric Head Trauma certification for Infant-Toddler renewals, or Child and Adult CPR and First Aid certification for School-Aged renewals; complete the appropriate self-assessment (DCC-245A for Infant-Toddler, DCC-255A for School-Aged); and include a letter of recommendation from a supervisor or, if none is available, from a parent or guardian of a child in the program.
School-Age Youth Development Credential (DCC)	Level 1: Associate – Requires 60 hours of instruction in school-aged youth development topics within the past 2 years OR 60 hours of instruction in school-aged youth development topics as part of a secondary education program. Level 2: Professional – Requires 120 hours of instruction in school-aged youth development topics within 2 years, OR a current Military School Age CDA, OR a current Preschool CDA plus 30 additional hours in school-aged youth topics OR completed Level 1 requirements within the past 3 years.	3-Year Renewal: Submit a completed renewal application; complete 45 hours of cabinet-approved training or college coursework in relevant topics (infant-toddler or school-aged youth development); provide a resume documenting 480 hours of work or volunteer experience with children in the past three years; hold current Pediatric CPR and First Aid and Pediatric Head Trauma certification for Infant-Toddler renewals, or Child and Adult CPR and First Aid certification for School-Aged renewals; complete the appropriate self-assessment (DCC-245A for Infant-Toddler, DCC-255A for School-Aged); and include a letter of

	Level 3: Leader – Requires an Associate, Bachelor's, or higher degree in school-aged youth development with a minimum of 9 credit hours in school-aged youth development topics, OR a Bachelor's degree or higher in another field with 60 additional hours of instruction in school-aged youth development topics in the past 2 years.	recommendation from a supervisor or, if none is available, from a parent or guardian of a child in the program.
Trainer's Credential (DCC)	Credential for delivering approved training to early childhood professionals in Kentucky; requires ECE experience (Levels 1–5) or specialty experience for specialty trainers, completion of Introduction to Kentucky ECE Resources, Cabinet Data System training, FET seminar (recommended for specialties), and application to DCC.	All credential holders must complete a renewal application every three years. Levels 2–4: Applicants must complete 30 clock hours of continuing education within the three-year renewal cycle, including: • 7 hours in <i>How to Train Other Adults</i> • 8 hours in Early Childhood content • 15 hours in related professional development or a combination of Early Childhood and/or <i>How to Train Other Adults</i> hours Level 5: Renewal requires submission of the renewal application. Specialty Credentials: Renewal requires a current license, if applicable.
Child Development Associate CDA® (National)	Focus: Competency-based credential recognizing knowledge and skills to work with young children. Available in Infant-Toddler, Preschool, and Family Child Care settings. Initial Requirements to Obtain: • Complete 45 hours of approved training in early childhood topics. • Document practical work experience with children. • Submit a recommendation statement from a supervisor or mentor.	Valid 3 years; Requires 45 hours training, documented work, and recommendation statement.
Birth-to-Five CDA® (National)	Focus: Newer competency-based CDA credential (2025) covering the full birth-to-five continuum, integrating Infant-Toddler and Preschool content. Emphasizes holistic child development, family engagement, and inclusive practices. Initial Requirements to Obtain: • Complete 45 hours of approved training in birth-to-five early childhood topics. • Document practical experience working with children. • Submit a recommendation statement from a supervisor or mentor.	Valid 3 years; Requires 45 hours of training, documented experience, and recommendation statement.

Footnote: Early childhood apprenticeships in Kentucky provide structured on-the-job training and may include related coursework. While they are not official credentials, the training and experience gained can count toward state credentials such as the Infant-Toddler Credential, School-Aged Youth Development Credential, Commonwealth Child Care Credential, or CDA®. Completion of an apprenticeship alone does not confer a credential; participants must still meet the formal requirements of the credential they seek.

STATE-ISSUED BADGES

The Division of Child Care has designed a pathway for early educators to focus on a specific topic of professional learning and recognition of the knowledge and skills in the form of a digital badge. A digital badge is an indicator of accomplishment or skill that can be displayed professionally to show achievement. Digital badges are portable and sharable snapshots of targeted professional learning in the areas of Infant and Toddler and/or School Age content. There is no application process for the badges. The badge training requirements and progress are tracked and awarded through ECE-TRIS automatically.

The Infant and Toddler Badge and School-Aged Youth Credential Badge:

The Infant and Toddler badge and School-Aged Youth Credential Badge is earned when a total of 30 hours of ECE-TRIS approved professional learning is completed. The completed 30 hours needs to include at least 4 hours of learning in each core content area. Badge progress is automatically tracked and awarded through the Kentucky Professional Development Registry system, ECE-TRIS. To view your badge progress, login to your ECE-TRIS account and scroll to the bottom, then select “View Badge Progress” in the My Information section.



STATE-ISSUED MICROCREDENTIALS LEVEL 1-3

The Kentucky Credentials aim to recognize and support early childhood educators through statewide credentials, honoring their training, work experience and formalized education pertaining to the age group they serve. These credentials are a step in acknowledging expertise working with Infant and Toddler and School-aged age settings.

Note: These Kentucky Credentials do not currently qualify for non-college funding, KHEAA, or Milestones.

These Kentucky Credentials are optional professional development opportunities for growing their career in the early education field. Below are the requirements for each level for both the Infant and Toddler, and the School-Aged Youth Development credential. To apply for the Credential an application must be completed in the Professional Development Registry, ECE-TRIS and can be renewed every three (3) years.

Basic Requirements	• Must be 18 years of age or older
Early Childhood Education Training/Education	• Level 1: Infant and Toddler Associate ○ 60 hours of instruction in cabinet approved infant and toddler topics within the past 2 years OR ○ 60 hours of instruction cabinet approved infant and toddler topics as part of a secondary education program • Level 2: Infant and Toddler Professional ○ 120 hours of instruction in cabinet approved infant and toddler topics within 2 years AND required work/volunteer experience OR ○ Current Infant and Toddler CDA OR ○ Current Family Child Care CDA AND ▪ 30 additional hours in infant and toddler topics OR ▪ Completed requirements for Level 1 within the past 3 years • Level 3: Infant and Toddler Leader ○ Associate degree, Bachelor's degree, or higher in infant and toddler field with a minimum of 9 credit hours in infant and toddler topics & required work/volunteer experience OR ○ Bachelor's degree or higher in an unrelated field with 60 additional hours of instruction in cabinet approved infant and toddler topics in the past 2 years & required work/volunteer experience
Experience	• If work/volunteer experience is required, the applicant must provide a detailed resume with 480 hours of work and/or volunteer experience providing services that promote infant and toddler development within the past 3 years
Health and Safety Requirements	• Current Pediatric First Aid/CPR Certification • Current Pediatric Abusive Head Trauma Certification
Observations/Verifications	• Letter of Recommendation from current supervisor • Completed Self-Assessment (DCC-245A) • If requested, applicants must submit proof of infant and toddler related coursework (Example: course syllabus)
Additional Requirements	• All Levels required to complete "Introduction to Kentucky Credentials" course • All Levels required to complete cabinet training on trauma informed care ○ ECE 119: Kentucky Strengthening Families Initiative: Trauma-Informed Care and Resiliency Training • Renewals for all Levels – every 3 years with: ○ 45 hours of cabinet approved training or college coursework in infant and toddler topics ○ A detailed resume with documentation of 480 hours of work/volunteer experience providing services to infants and toddlers over the past 3 years ○ Current Pediatric CPR/First Aid Certification ○ Current Pediatric Abusive Head Trauma Certification ○ Completed Self-Assessment (DCC-245A) ○ Letter of Recommendation from supervisor or parent/guardian if no supervisor

Basic Requirements	• Must be 18 years of age or older
Training & Education Requirements	• Level 1: School-Aged Youth Development Associate ◦ 60 hours of instruction in school-aged youth development topics within the past 2 years OR ◦ 60 hours of instruction in school-aged youth development topics as part of a secondary education program • Level 2: School- Aged Youth Development Professional ◦ 120 hours of instruction in school-aged youth development topics within 2 years AND required work/volunteer experience OR ◦ Current Military School Age CDA OR ◦ Current Preschool CDA AND ▪ 30 additional hours in school-aged youth topics OR ▪ Completed requirements for Level 1 within the past 3 years • Level 3: School-Aged Youth Development Leader ◦ Associate degree, Bachelor's degree, or higher in school-aged youth development field with a minimum of 9 credit hours in school-aged youth development topics & required work/volunteer experience OR ◦ Bachelor's degree or higher in other field with 60 additional hours of instruction in school-aged youth development topics in the past 2 years & required work/volunteer experience
Work/Volunteer Experience	• If work/volunteer experience is required, the applicant must provide a detailed resume with 480 hours of work and/or volunteer experience providing services directly to school-aged children within the past 3 years.
Health and Safety Requirements	• Current Child/Adult First Aid/CPR Certification
Observations/Verifications	• Letter of Recommendation from current supervisor • Completed Self-Assessment (DCC-255A) • If requested, Applicants must submit proof of school-aged youth development related coursework. Example: Course Syllabus
Additional Requirements	• All Levels required to complete "Introduction to Kentucky Credentials" course • All Levels required to complete cabinet training on trauma informed care ◦ ECE 119: Kentucky Strengthening Families Initiative: Trauma-Informed Care and Resiliency Training • Renewals for all Levels – every 3 years with: ◦ 45 hours of cabinet approved training or college coursework in school-aged youth development topics ◦ A detailed resume with documentation of 480 hours of work/volunteer experience providing services to school-aged children over the past 3 years ◦ Current Child and Adult CPR/FA Certification

	- o Completed Self-Assessment (DCC-255A) - o Letter of Recommendation from supervisor or parent/guardian if no supervisor
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COMMONWEALTH CHILD CARE CREDENTIAL

The Commonwealth Child Care Credential (CCCC) provides additional training to practitioners wishing to exceed the minimum training hours required by Child Care Licensing Regulations. The CCCC is a planned program of education and training based on the Core Competencies described in this framework. The hours of instruction (60) are intended to fulfill half of the time requirements and skill mastery level necessary for the Child Development Associate Credential.

The Commonwealth Child Care Credential is awarded by the Division of Child Care. The credential is based on a common set of core competencies presented in the EC Core Content and aligns with the first 60 hours of the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential. The chief requirement for the credential is 60 hours of instruction, including field assignments, to be completed within one year. This can be articulated to (or be considered equal to) 3-credit-hour specific college courses from the approved CCCC course list. The 60 hours of instruction include areas as presented in the Microcredentials Requirements Tables above.

Candidates for the credential may complete a CCCC/CDA non-college scholarship application and upon being approved are admitted to an approved Commonwealth Child Care Credential program with a Cabinet Approved Training Agency. The scholarship is funded through the Division of Child Care (as funds are available).

Before the training is completed, the trainer conducts an exit assessment of the trainee using the nationally recognized Child Development Associate observation tool. After the assessment, the trainee and training organization write an action plan to promote the trainee's continued growth.

Those who have earned a Commonwealth Child Care Credential must obtain 15 hours of training each year to stay current in the field and to maintain the credential. Training for the Commonwealth Child Care Credential is conducted by agencies approved by the Division of Child Care. A list of approved training organizations can be found at

<http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dcc/>

Certificate of Eligibility:

High school students, who are at least 18 years of age, can earn a Certificate of Eligibility (COE) through their high school Family Consumer Science courses. The Certificate of Eligibility can be used to apply for a Commonwealth Child Care Credential if the applicant is 18, and is employed at least 20 hours a week with a Child Care program. The educator who applies for a Commonwealth Child Care Credential using a Certificate of Eligibility will also receive 15 clock hours of annual training credit in the state PD Registry.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE'S (CDA)

The Child Development Associate (CDA) is a nationally recognized credential that plays a key role in Kentucky's Early Childhood Professional Development Framework. Acknowledged by the state as a foundational step in an early childhood professional's career, the CDA represents a significant milestone in demonstrating competency in working with young children. It is one of several recognized credentials in Kentucky, offering early childhood educators a clear and respected entry point into the field. The CDA is designed to validate essential skills and knowledge in child development, promoting high-quality care and education across various early learning settings.

In Kentucky, professionals pursuing the CDA credential have access to both college and non-college learning pathways, ensuring that individuals with diverse educational backgrounds can participate. The flexibility of the professional development framework allows for entry at various levels, and the CDA can serve as a building block toward higher credentials and roles, such as the Director's Credential or the Early Care and Education Trainer's Credential. Additionally, financial support through scholarships—like those offered by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) and the Division of Child Care (DCC)—may be available to help cover the cost of obtaining the CDA, further supporting accessibility and professional growth in the field of early childhood education.

DIRECTOR'S CREDENTIAL

The Director's Credential is intended to provide education and development in the skill areas needed to manage an early childhood program. The program may be an approved course of study or may be part of a larger degree program depending on the institution's degree approved course list. The Director's Credential coursework can only be obtained through an accredited higher education institution. Candidates work through the higher education institution of their choice for information related to the specific program of study for the Director's Credential.

Candidates who meet eligibility guidelines for the Early Childhood Development Scholarship (ECDS) Program may use this program as a resource for financial assistance with coursework leading to the award of a Director's Credential. The Director's Credential is awarded by the Division of Child Care upon successful completion of the requirements and upon recommendation by an approved higher-education institution.

Requirements include 12 college credit hours in early childhood education and related administrative subjects. These hours can be earned as part of a degree program in early childhood education or individuals may enroll specifically for Director's Credential course work. Course work may be offered by approved state technical or community colleges, or at universities or colleges offering Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) programs.

Out of State Director's Credentials:

Major areas of core knowledge and competencies for the Director's Credentials include regulations and laws; ethics; programming for families and children; supervision and staff development; health and safety; financial management and marketing; and, community collaboration/resource management.

Regulations and laws. This includes knowledge of the local, state and national laws and regulations that govern licensed child care providers (e.g., food service, the Americans with Disabilities Act). It also includes the ability to obtain information about the intent of those laws and regulations, as well as changes to them, from sources such as government agency web sites.

Ethics. This includes knowledge of ethical issues related to the financial operation of a center as well as dealings with children, families, and staff (e.g., confidentiality, compensation, the code of ethics for the National Association for the Education of Young Children). It also includes an understanding of individual rights and diverse backgrounds and how they affect relationships – so directors can handle daily challenges appropriately and without discrimination.

Programming for families and children. This includes a knowledge of theoretical, foundational, philosophical and historical perspectives in early childhood programming (such as developmentally appropriate practice, the primary caregiver system, constructivism, behaviorism, early intervention, Montessori, High Scope, Reggio, the activity-based approach); the ability to develop and implement appropriate action plans (such as inclusion plans, individual family service plans, and individual education plans) to meet the individual needs of children; awareness of assessment tools for both children's development and programming; and understanding the effect of culture and environment on adults' beliefs regarding discipline and guidance as well as children's development and self-concept.

Supervision and staff development. This includes an understanding of managerial styles (such as authoritative, democratic, collegial) and personality in terms of motivating staff members for professional growth; the ability to supervise staff through planned programs; and, the ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in print and to truly listen.

Health and safety. This includes knowledge of local, state and national laws and regulations that provide for the mental and physical health of children, families, and staff; knowledge of how to implement those laws and regulations; awareness of the nutritional needs of children and food preparation procedures; and, the ability to find information about health and safety in order to provide resources to staff and families.

Financial management and marketing. This includes the comprehension of financial concepts and the ability to use financial tools to make a center financially viable or to expand the center; the ability to maintain accurate and complete financial reports and to project income; awareness of the local marketplace and how to assess supply and demand in the area to attract families, staff and financial supporters to the center; and, the ability to understand the role of the center in relation to the larger community in order to define and promote the center's image.

Community collaboration/resource management. This includes knowledge of resources in the community for young children and their families which go beyond early care, intervention

and education; an understanding of how to help children and families gain access to these resources; and an understanding of how to collaborate with other groups and individuals to increase community resources.

TRAINER'S CREDENTIAL

The Kentucky Early Care and Education Trainer's Credential outlines the competencies and standards required for individuals who provide training to early childhood practitioners. A trainer's level of education, training, and experience determines the content levels at which they are qualified to offer training. As the complexity of the training content and the expected competency level of participants increases, so do the required trainer qualifications.

This credentialing system benefits both trainers and participants:

- Participants can identify the level of content being delivered, allowing them to choose training that best matches their current needs and skill level.
- Trainers can tailor training content to align with specific skill levels of the trainees and the appropriate competency areas within the Kentucky Early Childhood Core Content.

There are specific steps involved in obtaining a Trainer's Credential, which include meeting qualifications tied to training levels. These steps help maintain a multi-level training system across the state. Additionally, Specialty Trainers, those with expertise in a specific area related to children and families, must meet defined credentialing requirements.

In general, all credential trainers must:

- Be at least 21 years old
- Meet the established educational requirements
- Have relevant experience in the following core areas:
 - Child growth and development
 - Learning environments and curriculum
 - Health, safety, and nutrition
 - Family and community partnerships
 - Child assessment
 - Professional development and professionalism
 - Program management and evaluation

In addition to meeting the education and experience criteria for their credential level, all applicants must also complete the following mandatory training components:

- **Introduction to Resources in Kentucky for Early Care and Education Trainers** (2 clock hours) This online course provides foundational knowledge of Kentucky's early care and education systems, and available professional development supports. Required for all trainers, including Specialty Trainers.
<https://uk.catalog.instructure.com/browse/hdi/adult-learning>

- **Fundamentals of Effective Training Seminar** (17 hours)
This seminar equips trainers with best practices in adult learning, presentation techniques, and strategies for engaging diverse learner groups. Recommended for Specialty Trainers. <https://uk.catalog.instructure.com/browse/hdi/adult-learning>
- **Cabinet-designated data system training** (2 clock hours)
This training ensures that trainers are proficient in using the training data system, supporting accurate reporting and regulatory compliance in Kentucky. Required for all trainers, including Specialty Trainers. <https://learn.trc.ky.gov/moodle/course/view.php?id=330>

Upon successful completion of these components and submission of an application and all required documentation, the Trainer's Credential is awarded by the Division of Child Care (DCC).

These requirements help ensure that all trainers are well-equipped to support high-quality professional development across the early care and education field.

Table 5. Trainers Levels

TRAINER LEVELS	EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE	REQUIREMENTS: ALL APPLICANTS MUST BE AT LEAST 21 YEARS OF AGE	PERMITTED TRAINING LEVELS	RENEWAL PERIOD
1	-H.S. Diploma or equivalent and -At least 3 years FT* related experience in early childhood field	-Complete Introduction to Resources in Kentucky for Early Childhood Trainer's -Complete cabinet designated data system training	-Co-train single topic with credentialed trainer at higher training level	-Valid for three years -Non-renewable
2	-At least a CDA or Director's Credential -3 years FT* experience in early childhood field OR -10 years FT*related experience in relevant core content, and formal early childhood training equaling 45 clock hrs; or 4.5 C.E.U.s; or 3 college credit hours	-Complete Introduction to Resources in Kentucky for Early Childhood Trainer's -Complete Fundamentals of Effective Training -Complete cabinet designated data system training	-Training hours as required by the Division of Licensed Child Care -Commonwealth Child Care Credential training or initial 60 hours of CDA training through an approved training organization (Levels 1 and 2 of the Rubric for levels of Training/Professional Development) -Co-train higher (60-120 hours) CDA level with a level 4 and 5 Trainer through a approved training organizations -Co-train 12 hours with a Level 4 or Level 5 trainer before training solo	Renewable every three years by application, including documentation of: -Training in EC field equaling 30 clock hours to include a minimum of 7 hours in adult learning theory and 8 hours in early childhood -Remain updated on state and national early childhood issues. State updates available at websites

3	-Associate degree in early childhood or the equivalent of 30 credit hours in early childhood coursework and -3 years FT* related experience in early childhood field OR -At least a Bachelor's degree in a field related to early childhood, and -At least 1 year FT* related experience in EC field OR -A Bachelor's degree in a field not related to early childhood and -10 years FT* related experience in early childhood field	-Complete Introduction to Resources in Kentucky for Early Childhood Trainer's -Complete Fundamentals of Effective Training -Complete cabinet designated data system training	-Training hours as required by the Division of Licensed Child Care Levels 1,2,and 3 on Rubric for Levels of Training/Professional Development - Commonwealth Child Care Credential or CDA instruction, through an approved training contractor -Train Levels 1,2,and 3 on the Rubric for Levels of Training/Professional Development, through an approved training organization	Renewable every three years by application, including documentation of: -Training in EC field equaling 30 clock hours to include a minimum of 7 hours in adult learning theory and 8 hours in early childhood -Remain updated on state and national early childhood issues. State updates available at websites
4	-At least a Bachelor's degree in early childhood, and -1 year FT* related experience in early childhood field OR -A Bachelor's degree in a related field to early childhood and the equivalent of 3 credit hours in child development and 1 year FT* related experience in early childhood field OR -At least a Bachelor's degree in a field not related to early childhood, and the equivalent of 3 credit hours in child development, and -At least 10 years FT* related experience in EC field	-Complete Introduction to Resources in Kentucky for Early Childhood Trainer's -Complete Fundamentals of Effective Training (OR submit documentation of equivalent training) -Complete cabinet designated data system training	-Training hours as required by the Division of Licensed Child Care, Levels 1,2,3,4 -Train Levels 1,2,3 and 4 tracks on Rubric for Levels of Training/Professional Development, through an approved training organization	Renewable every three years by application, including documentation of: -On-going training in EC field equaling 30 clock hours to include a minimum of 7 hours in adult learning theory and 8 hours in early childhood -Remain updated on state and national early childhood issues. State updates available at websites
5	-At least a Masters degree in early childhood and -1 year FT* related experience in early childhood field OR -At least a Masters degree in a field related to early childhood (non related not considered) and 3 credit hours in child development, and 1 year FT* related experience in Early Childhood field	-Complete Introduction to Resources in Kentucky for Early Childhood Trainer's -Complete Fundamentals of Effective Training (OR submit documentation of equivalent training) -Complete cabinet designated data system training	-Train at all training levels (1-5).	-Renewable every three years by application, - Remain updated on state and national early childhood issues. State updates available at websites

Specialty Trainer	Current license, certification, or equivalent and at least three years related experience in area of expertise in which topic is being trained	-Complete Introduction to Resources in Kentucky for Early Childhood Trainer's -Complete cabinet designated data system training	-Special training ONLY in area of expertise -Training hours as required by the Division of Licensed Child Care through an organization ONLY in area of expertise	Renewable every three years by application, including proof of current license, certificate, or credential in area of expertise
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* Full Time (at least 30 hours per week), Part Time (15-29 hours per week) will apply towards full time experience at the rate of 2 PT years =1FT year.

Technical Assistance: Training Coaches

Training Coaches with Child Care Aware of Kentucky offer targeted Technical Assistance (TA) to support Kentucky Credentialed Trainers in delivering high-quality, effective training. This TA helps trainers align with state standards and competencies, while also enhancing their ability to meet the needs of adult learners.

Coaches assist credentialed trainers by:

- Sharing resources and strategies for effective training delivery, content development, and learner engagement.
- Supporting trainers in improving training quality, which ultimately leads to stronger early childhood programs and better outcomes for children and families.

This collaborative TA process empowers trainers to grow professionally while ensuring the training they deliver is relevant, standards-based, and tailored to the diverse needs of early childhood professionals across Kentucky.

Locate your regional training coach at: <https://www.childcareawareky.org/about-child-aware/coaches/>

EARLY CHILDHOOD REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Registered Apprenticeship is an earn-while-you-learn training program designed to help you build valuable skills in the early childhood field — all while staying employed. Through a customized training plan, one-on-one mentorship, and hands-on experience, you'll work toward earning a nationally recognized credential that supports long-term career growth.

Apprentices gain knowledge through two main components:

- **On-the-Job Training (OJT):** Practical experience working in an early childhood setting.
- **Related Technical Instruction (RTI):** Classroom-based learning that deepens your understanding of child development, caregiving practices, and leadership.

This program is sponsored by The Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood and supports four apprenticeship occupations, each designed to meet different career goals within the early childhood field. The following outlines the occupations available and the target audience for each:

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST (ECDS)

The ECDS apprenticeship is designed for individuals who are fairly new to the early childhood field and are looking to build a strong foundation in child development and caregiving practices. Whether you're already working in the field or you are entering the workforce for the first time, this pathway offers the essential knowledge and hands-on experience needed to succeed in early care and education settings.

Participants will learn the fundamentals of early childhood development, health and safety practices, positive guidance strategies, and the importance of play-based learning. The program prepares individuals to work effectively with young children and lays the groundwork for potential credentials such as the Child Development Associate (CDA).

This program is Ideal for those beginning their journey in early childhood education, and sets the stage for a career working with young children and families.

Apprentices gain knowledge through two main components:

- **On-the-Job Training**=4,000 hours (estimated 2 years of full-time work in early care and education setting)
- **Related Technical Instruction**=288 hours

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR (ECED)

The Early Childhood Educator apprenticeship is designed for individuals working in the early childhood classroom who want to take the next step in their professional journey by pursuing a degree at an institution of higher education.

The program provides guidance, resources, and academic support to help educators transition from the CDA to an associate or bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. Participants will strengthen their teaching practice while gaining the credentials needed for expanded career opportunities in education.

Whether you're aiming to deepen your knowledge, qualify for higher-paying positions, or prepare for future educational roles this pathway helps turn classroom experience into academic. Apprentices gain knowledge through two main components:

- **On-the-Job Training**=2,000 hours (estimated 1 year of full-time work in early care and education setting)
- **Related Technical Instruction**=144 hours

EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDENT SUPPORT SPECIALIST (ECSS)

The ECSSS apprenticeship is designed for early childhood educators who have completed their CDA and want to further their understanding of individual child development.

The program focuses on building a specialized skill set to identify and support the unique needs of each child in the classroom. Educators will gain practical tools and strategies to adjust classroom routines, activities, and environments to better meet children's developmental needs.

The program also provides guidance on how to connect families with helpful resources and strengthen the overall support systems within the classroom, helping educators create a responsive and nurturing learning environment for all children.

This pathway is ideal for those who want to enhance their ability to observe, respond to, and support children on a more individualized level while maintaining the flow and structure of a group setting.

Apprentices gain knowledge through two main components:

- **On-the-Job Training**=2,000 hours (estimated 1 year of full-time work in early care and education setting)
- **Related Technical Instruction**=144 hours

EARLY CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATOR/DIRECTOR (ECAD)

The ECAD apprenticeship is designed for individuals who have completed at least their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and are seeking to advance into leadership roles within the Early Childhood Education (ECE) field. Ideal candidates are aspiring administrators or directors who are ready to build upon their foundational knowledge and take the next step in their careers.

The program focuses on administrative and business practices specific to early childhood settings, equipping participants with the essential skills needed to manage centers effectively. Topics include program operations, budgeting, human resources, regulatory compliance, leadership, and family and community engagement.

Apprentices gain knowledge through two main components:

- **On-the-Job Training**=4,000 hours (estimated 2 years of full-time work in early care and education setting)
- **Related Technical Instruction**=288 hours

For more information, visit [Apprenticeships - Governor's Office of Early Childhood](#)

SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS, & GRANTS

Recognizing that financial barriers can limit opportunities for career advancement and quality improvement, Kentucky offers a range of funding options to support individuals at all stages of their professional journey. This section provides an overview of scholarships, stipends, and other financial resources designed to promote equitable access to professional development, helping to build a well-qualified, sustainable early care and education workforce across the Commonwealth.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

Early Childhood Development Scholarship:

The Early Childhood Development Scholarship, administered by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA), is available to support early care and education professionals pursuing college coursework in early childhood education. This scholarship helps cover the cost of tuition for individuals working toward a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, an Associate's or Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, or the Director's Credential at approved Kentucky colleges and universities. Scholarship recipients may also apply for reimbursement of related educational expenses after successful course completion.

All scholarships are awarded based on the availability of funds and on the adherence of the scholar to eligibility guidelines for the Early Childhood Development Scholarship and on the eligibility requirements of the specific training or education program in which the candidate is enrolled.

Related Educational Reimbursement Award:

The Related Educational Reimbursement Expense is a monetary award paid to Early Care and Education Professionals participating only in the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority college scholarship program upon completion of a scholarship semester/term.

DIVISION OF CHILD CARE NON-COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS, GRANTS

The Division of Child Care offers non-college scholarships and awards, as well as grants to support improved quality in early care and education settings, each of which is described below.

Non-College Scholarship Program:

The Non-College Scholarship Program provides financial assistance to individuals seeking training for the Commonwealth Child Care Credential (CCCC) and the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA). The CCC/CDA Credential Scholarship Program pays \$1,000.00 for 120 clock hours of training on behalf of scholars to an approved training organization.

Awards

Milestone Achievement Awards:

The Milestone Achievement Award is a monetary award paid to Early Care and Education Professionals participating in the college and/or non-college scholarship program(s) upon completion of an early care and education credential or degree.

CDA Application Award:

The CDA application award pays a \$425 direct assessment fee to the Council for Professional Recognition on behalf of eligible applicants. CDA candidates must meet eligibility guidelines. For more information on the CDA award contact your local professional development coach. For information on the CDA assessment, contact the Council for Professional Recognition, toll free at (800) 424-4310 or visit <https://www.cdacouncil.org/en/>

Grants

Child Development Associate's Credential (CDA) and Child Development Associate's Credential (CDA-K) Mini Grant:

Mini-grants are available to cover the \$325 Direct Assessment Fee for the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, regardless of whether the credential is earned through college credit or non-credit coursework. Administered by the Division of Child Care, these grants are paid directly to the Council for Professional Recognition on behalf of eligible recipients. Applicants must meet all CDA eligibility requirements and may apply through their local Professional Development (PD) Counselor.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Mini Grant:

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) mini grant helps with the validation fee on behalf of eligible applications. Candidates must meet eligibility guidelines. The on-site fee is based on the program level. The NAEYC mini grant is available to Kentucky licensed type I centers.

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Mini Grant:

The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) mini grant pays up to \$500 for the accreditation fee to the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) on behalf of eligible applicants. The NAFCC mini grant is available to Kentucky certified family child care homes and licensed type II homes.

Council on Accreditation (COA) Mini Grant:

The Council on Accreditation (COA) mini grant pays up to \$900 in accreditation fees (\$150 accreditation fee and \$750 accreditation visit) to the Council on Accreditation (COA) for the National After-School Association on behalf of eligible applicants. The COA is available to Kentucky licensed school-age programs.

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TRAINEESHIP SCHOLARSHIP

The Kentucky Department of Education provides special education scholarships that can be used for teachers pursuing the IECE certification in state-funded preschool programs. The Traineeship scholarships are available for lead teachers in the public school preschool program or preschool/Head Start blended programs who hold a bachelor's degree but not an IECE certification. The funds pay for up to 90% of tuition for up to six college credits for four consecutive semesters. Additional information can be found at <https://kytraineeship.org/>

WORK READY KENTUCKY SCHOLARSHIP

The Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship (WRKS) helps Kentuckians who have not yet earned an associate's degree obtain an industry-recognized certificate, diploma, or an associate of applied science degree. The WRKS program is available to college students. For more information, visit <https://workreadykentucky.com/>

Table 6. Kentucky Credentials and Degrees Scholarship Supports

Credential / Degree	Scholarship or Support Program
Commonwealth Child Care Credential (CCCC)	<i>Non-College Scholarship Program</i> - Pays \$1,000 for 120 clock hours of approved training toward the CCCC credential. Cabinet for Health and Family Services
Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential	<i>Non-College Scholarship Program</i> - Covers \$1,000 for 120 clock hours training toward CDA. <i>CDA KIDS NOW Mini Grant</i> - Pays \$425 assessment fee to Council for Professional Recognition. Cabinet for Health and Family Services
Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education	<i>Early Childhood Development Scholarship</i> – Covers up to full tuition and fees, up to \$6,751 per semester (2024–25); eligibility includes employment and service commitment. kheaa.comscholarshipbuddykentucky.com
Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (or related)	<i>Early Childhood Development Scholarship</i> – As above. kheaa.comscholarshipbuddykentucky.com

Master's Degree in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education	<i>Early Childhood Development Scholarship</i> – Now included in eligible programs after regulatory amendment. Kentucky Legislative Research Commissionkheaa.com
Director's Credential (12 credit hours through accredited institution)	<i>Early Childhood Development Scholarship</i> – Eligible under approved credentials. Cabinet for Health and Family ServicesChildCare Aware KY
Kentucky Early Childhood Development Director's Certificate (baccalaureate level)	<i>Early Childhood Development Scholarship</i> —eligible program of study. kheaa.comscholarshipbuddykentucky.com
CDA Mini Grant	Up to \$425 toward CDA assessment fee. Cabinet for Health and Family Services
COA Mini Grant (National After-School Association accreditation)	Pays up to \$900 in accreditation fees for Kentucky licensed school-age programs. Cabinet for Health and Family Services
NAEYC Mini Grant (for Type I centers)	Helps cover NAEYC validation fees at the program's level. Cabinet for Health and Family Services
NAFCC Mini Grant (Family Child Care Accreditation)	Pays up to \$500 for accreditation fee for certified family child care homes. Cabinet for Health and Family Services
Milestone Achievement Award	Monetary award for completing an early care and education credential or degree via college or non-college scholarship programs. Cabinet for Health and Family Services
Related Educational Reimbursement Expense	Monetary award upon completing a scholarship semester/term via KHEAA college scholarship program. Cabinet for Health and Family Services
Traineeship Program for Special Education / IECE Certification	Tuition assistance for courses leading to Special Education or Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) certification for full-time teachers in Kentucky public schools; covers up to 30 credit hours and may include book/supply stipend. KY Traineeship

Technical Assistance: Child Care Professional Development Coaches

Professional Development Coaches with Child Care Aware of Kentucky provide essential guidance and technical assistance to early childhood professionals. Their support helps professionals navigate career pathways, advance credentials, access training and funding opportunities, and enhance program quality. By offering individualized guidance, resources, and targeted support, coaches empower professionals to strengthen skills, achieve professional goals, and create high-quality learning environments for children and families.

Table 7. Child Care Professional Development Coaches Information

Function	Coach Role / Support	Expected Outcomes
Accreditation Support	Assist programs applying for national accreditation, including National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), and Council on Accreditation Afterschool (COA Afterschool)	Programs achieve accreditation and demonstrate high-quality care standards
Credentialing and Scholarships	Guide non-college credentialing for Commonwealth Child Care Credential (CCCC) and Child Development Associate (CDA); connect to Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) scholarships for degrees, Director's Credential, and CDA	Professionals advance credentials and pursue higher education opportunities
Professional Development Grants and Awards	Support applications for grants, educational expense reimbursements, and milestone achievement awards	Professionals access funding and recognition to support professional growth
Professional Development Planning	Support professionals in developing individualized professional development plans with intentional, targeted goals aligned with their career pathway.	Professionals build knowledge, strengthen skills, and enhance program quality

TRAINING

Child care licensing requires 15 hours of annual non-specified training (Type I and II), 9 hours for certified providers and a 6-hour mandatory initial Orientation for Early Care and Education Professionals curriculum, regardless of an individual's education or experience level. For the Kentucky Preschool Program, a teaching assistant must participate annually in a minimum of eighteen (18) hours of professional development. Lead teachers are required to complete the number of professional development days that apply to certified personnel in their local school district. All professional development activities must be relevant to the nature and needs of young children and their families, including those with special needs.

One of the major components of a professional development system is the acquisition of knowledge through education. There are a number of approaches that can be used to support education. These include (but may not be limited to):

- Formal academic coursework (e.g., college or university degree programs)
- Online learning (e.g., webinars, virtual classes, self-paced modules)
- Workshops and seminars
- Continuing education units (CEUs)
- Credentialing and certification programs
- Apprenticeships or practicum experiences
- Mentoring and coaching relationships
- Professional learning communities
- Conference participation
- Independent study or research

The current Kentucky Early Childhood Professional Development Framework outlines clear recommendations for structuring education, training, and credentials to promote high-quality practices throughout the early care, intervention, and education system. A defining feature of training and education within this framework is that learning experiences usually occur in controlled or simulated environments. Participants are often given opportunities to develop and practice skills through methods such as role-playing, simulations, case studies, scenario analysis, video critiques, and similar activities.

High-quality training refers to a structured learning experience that is:

- Designed with clear objectives that align with desired outcomes, competencies, or standards.
- Grounded in current research and tailored to the needs of the learners and the context in which they work.
Includes active learning strategies such as discussions, hands-on practice, reflection, and real-world applications.
- Focused on developing practical skills that can be directly applied in the workplace or real-life situations.

- Culturally and linguistically appropriate, and accommodates diverse learning styles and backgrounds.
- Includes opportunities for feedback, assessment, and continuous improvement based on outcomes and participant input.

In the context of early childhood education, high-quality training supports educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and practices to better meet the developmental and learning needs of young children.

LEVELS OF TRAINING

The following five training levels describe the knowledge base that trainees are assumed to have as well as the content for each level of training. The levels correspond to the trainer levels, EC Core Content and articulation plans. The training levels serve as a tool for the trainer and others who are planning workshops, institutes, and conferences and to train participants when selecting training.

Level 1. Participants have limited knowledge and experience in early childhood education. Training focuses on basic concepts, philosophy and vocabulary in EC Core Content areas and related needs of the learner. Participants will be able to tie these to concrete examples and do introductory work in basic skills. Evaluation will show increased knowledge.

Level 2. Participants may have a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential and two years of experience. They have basic knowledge and experience in early childhood education. Training focuses on EC Core Content areas and early childhood standards, including essential concepts, theory, philosophy and an extended vocabulary. Participants will be able to show that they understand how to apply concepts and skills, giving examples and details. They will also demonstrate the basic use of critical skills. Evaluation will show some measurable skills and increased knowledge.

Level 3. Participants may have an associate degree in the field of early childhood education, three years of experience, and already have competence in curriculum planning. Training focuses on EC Core Content areas and early childhood standards, deepening to include related concepts, theories, philosophies, and vocabulary. Training begins to address teacher performance standards. Participants will be able to show general knowledge and critical skills as well as to demonstrate interpersonal communication skills. Evaluation will show several measurable skills and increased knowledge.

Level 4. Participants have at least a four-year degree in early childhood education or a related field plus two years of experience. They already have competence in the area and are working toward expansion and refinement of their knowledge and critical skills. Training focuses on EC Core Content areas or related areas, identified needs and early childhood and teacher performance standards. Training continues to expand knowledge and vocabulary and includes basic research. Participants will be able to show broad knowledge of content areas; effective application of vocabulary, concepts and skills; effective interpersonal communication skills with

supporting examples and sufficient detail; and broad use of skills in content areas. Evaluation will show many skills or new knowledge and may include ongoing self-study.

Level 5. Participants have a four-year degree in early childhood education and advanced study plus four years of experience including the supervision or teaching of others. Participants have competence in content areas and are working toward extensive refinements and critical thinking skills. Training includes more advanced research. Participants will be able to show effective, insightful use of supporting examples, and/or relevant details with extensive use of critical skills. They will also be able to evaluate and synthesize information and make general applications. Evaluation will show multiple skills or new knowledge and may include ongoing self-study.

Table 8. Overview of Training Levels

Training Levels	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Description of training level	Develop basic knowledge <i>(assuming knowledge & experience are at or below Commonwealth Child Care Credential)</i>	Develop skills <i>(assuming basic knowledge & experience at level of CDA plus two or 3 years experience)</i>	Expand ability to develop curriculum <i>(assuming competence in curriculum planning at level of associate degree plus 3 years experience)</i>	Master skills for achieving identified goals <i>(assuming competence in content area at level of bachelor's degree plus two years experience)</i>	Modify skills for more effective application <i>(assuming competence at level of bachelor's degree plus advanced study & 4 years experience, including supervision &/or teaching)</i>
Training objectives	EC Core Content & related learner needs	EC Core Content, standards & related learner needs	EC Core Content, standards & teacher performance	EC Core Content, teacher & program standards	EC Core Content & teacher/leadership standards
Training focus	Basic concepts, philosophy & vocabulary	Essential concepts, theory, philosophy & extended vocabulary	Related concepts, theories & philosophies & further expanded vocabulary	Basic research in addition to expanded vocabulary, concepts, theory & philosophy	More advanced research building on learner's knowledge of EC Core Content

Demonstration of knowledge & skills	Can give concrete examples of basic vocabulary & concepts, demonstrate basic skills	Can correctly apply concepts & critical skills, giving examples & details	Can show interpersonal communication skills related to content as well as knowledge of content & other critical skills	Can effectively apply vocabulary, knowledge, concepts & skills to content; can show effective interpersonal communication skills with supporting examples, sufficient detail & broad use of skills	Can show extensive, consistent & effective application of skills to address issues & solve problems; integrate & expand concepts; use supporting examples &/or relevant details with critical skills; evaluate & synthesize information & make general applications
Evaluation	Finds increased knowledge	Finds some measurable skills & increased knowledge	Finds several measurable skills & increased knowledge	Finds many skills or new knowledge (through evaluation & ongoing self-study)	Finds multiple skills or new knowledge (through evaluation & ongoing self-study)

KENTUCKY STANDARDS OF TRAINING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS

The following five training levels describe the knowledge, skills, and experience that trainees are assumed to have, as well as the content for each level of training. These levels correspond to trainer qualifications, EC Core Content areas, and articulation plans. Early care, intervention, and education professionals may receive training in a variety of formats, including workshops, programs of study leading to a credential, and college and university offerings. Trainers use these levels to guide their planning by selecting appropriate content, designing learning experiences, and determining strategies that match participants' knowledge and skill levels. The training levels also serve as a tool for professional development planners and participants in selecting training that aligns with experience and professional growth goals.

Standard I: Promotes Professionalism

Promotes professionalism in the early childhood field by:

- Applying knowledge, skills, and processes acquired through professional development to instructional techniques.
- Aiding early care, intervention, and education professionals to establish priorities for professional growth through joint analysis of the participant's performance.

- Encouraging participation in professional organizations and activities.

Standard II: Demonstrates Knowledge of Content

Demonstrate knowledge of EC Core Content areas in Early Childhood Care and Education by:

- Relating knowledge in the trainer's area of expertise to the adult learners' ability levels.
- Integrating content knowledge into real-world applications and current issues.
- Incorporating digital tools and resources to enhance learning experiences and accessibility.

Standard III: Designs/Plans Instruction

Understands and develops sequential training plans by:

- Providing instruction that enables providers to apply knowledge and skills to make positive changes in the work environment.
- Creating learning experiences that actively involve the learner with hands-on activities whenever feasible; only watching videos without follow-up activities does not constitute best practices for delivering quality instruction.
- Ensuring cultural competency in training materials and methods so they are inclusive and respectful of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Standard IV: Creates/Maintains Learning Climate

Demonstrates ability to plan and develop an appropriate training outline by:

- Showing flexibility and creativity in developing training methods and procedures.
- Using and organizing multimedia resources, including technology to support learning.
- Organizing materials in a logical and sequential manner.

Standard V: Implements/Manages Instruction

Demonstrates ability to provide a variety of appropriate learning opportunities for adult learners by:

- Considering various learning styles, cultural differences, and barriers to learning.
- Using and developing multiple learning/teaching strategies that are appropriate to participants' learning levels.
- Integrating technology and digital resources to support active learning and engagement.

Standard VI: Assesses and Communicates Learning

- Evaluates training effectiveness through feedback received by:
- Assessing knowledge gained, attitudes changed, and/or skills obtained through appropriate methods (e.g., pre- and post-tests, end-of-session evaluations, hands-on activities).
- Making appropriate changes to instruction based upon feedback and assessment results.
- Considering how technology tools can support evaluation and feedback processes.

Standard VII: Collaborates with Colleagues/Parents/Others

Analyzes training needs of the community by:

- Inviting colleagues, parents, community representatives, and others to help design and implement collaborative instructional projects.
- Utilizing collaboration to create situations that enhance participants' learning.
- Recognizing differing viewpoints.
- Ensuring collaborative efforts reflect cultural competency and inclusiveness in design and implementation.

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PD STANDARDS

For programs administered through the Kentucky Department of Education, professional development is considered high quality when it meets the definition of professional development in 704 KAR 3:035 – Section 1(1) and Section 4(2) and all of the Kentucky Department of Education Professional Development Standards which are consistent with the federal criteria in Section 9101 of No Child Left Behind. Schools and districts will determine if the professional development for teachers, administrators and other school staff meets the following definition and standards for high quality professional development. All standards need to be applied in the context of the audience for professional development (PD) to qualify as high quality PD. The Department of Education recognizes that the extent to which professional development meets each standard may vary.

Standard 1: Professional Development is aligned with:

- local school and district goals and priorities as reflected in the school or district improvement plan or individual professional growth plans;
- Kentucky's Standards and Indicators for School Improvement; and
- Kentucky New or Experienced Teacher Standards or Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards, or other professional/job standards.

Standard 2: Professional Development is a continuous process of learning through consciously constructed relevant job-embedded experiences so that professional development experiences and professional learning are integrated in the day-to-day work of teachers, administrators, and others to support improved practices, effectiveness and the application of skills, processes, and content.

- *PD is sustained, intensive, classroom-focused and is on in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction, the teacher's performance in the classroom, and increased student performance; and*
- *PD is not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences unless they are a component of an intentionally designed comprehensive professional development plan based on teacher needs and student needs.*

Standard 3: Professional Development focuses on the knowledge and skills teachers, principals, administrators, and other school and district staff are to know and to do in support of student learning

and students' well-being. Professional development is based on what students need to know and be

able to do in order to meet Kentucky's challenging content standards and student performance standards. Student content, performance and opportunity to learn standards are the core of professional development.

Standard 4: Professional Development actively engages teachers, principals, administrators, and others in learning experiences that advance their understanding and application of research based instructional practices and skills that reduce barriers to learning, close achievement gaps, and improve student performance.

Standard 5: Professional Development prepares teachers, administrators, school council members and others in the school community as instructional leaders and collaborative partners in improving student performance (e.g., instructional leadership, organizational direction, collaborative decision making, analysis and use of data, planning, community partnerships, and creating a learning culture).

Standard 6: Professional Development is data and results driven focused on increasing teachers, administrators, and others' effectiveness in improving student performance and is continuously evaluated to improve the quality and impact of professional development.

Standard 7: Professional Development fosters an effective ongoing learning community that supports a culture and climate conducive to performance excellence.

Standard 8: Professional Development is culturally responsive and facilitates removing barriers to learning in an effort to meet each student's needs.

Standard 9: Professional Development is planned collaboratively (e.g., teachers and principals) and organized to maximize the collaborative use of all available resources to support high student and staff performance.

Standard 10: Professional Development fosters a comprehensive, long-range change process that communicates clear purpose, direction, and strategies to support teaching and learning.

Standard 11: Professional development is grounded in the critical attributes of adult pedagogy.

STATE TRAINING ORGANIZATIONS AND SERVICES

The major regional organizations that provide training and TA services to early care, intervention and education professionals across the state include the following.

Child Care Aware of Kentucky

Child Care Aware (CCA) of Kentucky is the statewide regional network for Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) services supporting access to safe, affordable, quality child care for families and professional development for child care providers and trainers. For more information visit <https://www.childcareawareky.org/>

Early Childhood Regional Training Centers

The Early Childhood Regional Training Centers provide various services for the early childhood community, including regional training/workshops, on-site consultations, lending library of materials, and annual statewide and regional collaborative institutes. Five early childhood regional training centers are dedicated to promoting high-quality learning environments and continuous quality improvement in state-funded preschool settings. For more information, visit <https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/Pages/techassist.aspx>



Division of Child Care (DCC) Approved Training Agencies

DCC approved training agencies in Kentucky are approved providers that offer various training and professional development courses.

Table 9. Division of Child Care Approved Training Agency Contact Information

Agency	Street Address	City, State, Zip	Phone	Email
4C- Community Coordinated Child Care	1215 South Third Street	Louisville, KY 40203	502-901-1644	sarah-bonifer@4Cforkids.com
Appalachian Early Childhood Network	151 Miss Edna Lane	Hazard, Kentucky, 41701	859-986-5896	kt@appchildnetwork.org
Child Care Council of Kentucky	2501 Sanderville Rd, Suite 120	Lexington, KY 40511	859-254-9176	debbie.link@cccokky.com
Early Childhood Consumer Education and Technical Assistance Center (ECTC)	132 Welchwood Drive	Berea, KY 40403	859-582-9032	tina@ecctc.org
EC Learn	22 Spiral Drive	Florence, KY 41051	330-417-3580	swoodall@eclearn.org
The 3TYS Agency	105 S. Main Street PO Box 849	Hopkinsville, KY 42241	270-498-0113	the3tysagency.2001@gmail.com
The Career Center for Early Educators	5438 New Cut Rd.	Louisville, KY 40214	502-909-7462	info@earlyeducatorcareers.org
University of Louisville Early Childhood Research Center	1905 South 1st Street	Louisville, KY 40292	502-295-5155	mhpullen02@louisville.edu
West Kentucky Community & Technical College	4810 Alben Barkley Dr; ATB Room 209B	Paducah, KY 42001	270-534-3087	greta.henry@kctcs.edu
Western Kentucky University	1906 College Heights Blvd, #11031	Bowling Green, KY 42101-1031	270-745-7087	sherri.meyer@wku.edu

ARTICULATION

ARTICULATION LEVELS

Articulation is the process that allows students or trainees to transfer credits for coursework from one training session or academic institution to another. In Kentucky, the early childhood education field has historically faced significant barriers to articulation, which have hindered the creation of a seamless professional development system. To address this, the state's Professional Development (PD) Framework incorporates a structured process that aligns credentialing and training for early childhood professionals. This framework is built around five levels of competency, each designed to articulate into the next. At the lower competency levels, completing a specific credential, program, or certificate can be transferred as college credit. This allows students to carry their training hours across various educational settings, including secondary schools, community and technical colleges, training programs, and four-year institutions. These academic credits can then be applied toward an Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) degree. Individual higher education institutions are responsible for verifying that students meet the necessary competency levels associated with each credential or certificate. Importantly, the articulation process does not require course titles or numbers to be identical across institutions or training programs.

ARTICULATION LEVELS

Level 1 (CCCC). Individuals must:

Meet requirements for the Commonwealth Child Care Credential, which include 60 clock hours of training, including field-based assignments

OR

Complete an advanced program at a secondary school (i.e., high school or vocational school), Discover College (an alliance of high schools and community and technical colleges in Daviess County which offers training for college credit) or similar institution. The EC Core Content competencies at Level 1 should be met with either option. An exit assessment is required for either option. The assessment is the responsibility of the institution that is providing the program. Each option earns 3 hours of college credit, and each transfers to Level 2.

Level 2 (CDA). Individuals must:

Meet the requirements for the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) as verified by the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition in Washington, D.C., including 120 clock hours of training. CDA recipients meet minimum EC Core Content competencies at Level 2. A candidate continuing in an Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education degree program can expect to meet all EC Core Content competencies at Level 2. The credential transfers as a minimum of 6 semester hours of college credit to Level 3A.

Level 3A (Post-Secondary Certificate). Individuals must:

Complete 18 to 21 semester hours in IECE content (which can include relevant secondary school or CDA credit) plus 12 to 15 semester hours in general education. A certificate of completion can be earned at a technical college, community college or 4-year college or university. Training must include practicum and field experience, and the recipient must demonstrate increasing levels of competency identified for IECE teacher performance standards at Level III, as well as the ability to integrate and apply content. This certificate transfers to Level 3B.

Level 3B (Associate's Degree). Individuals must:

Complete an additional 12 to 15 semester hours in IECE content plus an additional 15 to 18 semester hours in general education, resulting in an associate degree. The degree can be earned at a technical college, community college or 4-year college or university. Training must include practicum and field experience, and the recipient must demonstrate increasing levels of competency identified for IECE teacher performance standards at Level III, as well as the ability to integrate and apply content. The EC Core Content at Level 3 can be met at the completion of the associate degree. All training transfers to Level 4 and can be articulated with 4-year-degree programs in IECE.

Level 4 (Baccalaureate Degree). Individuals must:

Complete an additional 60 to 64 semester hours in IECE content and meet the other requirements of the degree-granting institution to receive a bachelor's degree. The course work must include field experiences, practicum and/or student teaching. Recipients must demonstrate the high level of competency identified for IECE performance standards and an increased ability to integrate and apply content, as well as to generate strategies for improving the performance of self and children. The EC Core Content competencies at Level 4 should be met at the completion of the bachelor's degree.

Level 5 (Master's Degree). Individuals must:

Meet requirements for a master's degree to obtain initial teaching certification or to complete advanced studies. Course work for the degree must include field experiences, practicum, student teaching and/or internship. Recipients must demonstrate the highest level of competency identified for IECE teacher performance standards and a high level of ability to synthesize, integrate and apply content. The EC Core Content competencies at Level 5 will be met at the completion of the master's degree.

Table 10. Articulation Levels and Requirements

Level	Credential / Degree	Requirements	Credits Earned / Transfer Info	Competency Expectations
1	Commonwealth Child Care Credential (CCCC)	- 60 clock hours of training with field assignments OR - Completion of advanced secondary school program (e.g., Discover College) - Exit assessment required	3 college credit hours Transfers to Level 2	EC Core Content at Level 1
2	Child Development Associate (CDA)	- 120 clock hours of training - Credential verified by the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition	Minimum of 6 college credit hours Transfers to Level 3A	EC Core Content at Level 2
3A	Post-Secondary Certificate	- 18–21 semester hours in IECE content (includes secondary/CDA credit) - 12–15 semester hours in general education - Practicum and field experience	Transfers to Level 3B	IECE teacher performance standards at Level III
3B	Associate Degree	- Additional 12–15 hours in IECE content - Additional 15–18 hours in general education - Practicum and field experience	Transfers to Level 4	IECE teacher performance standards at Level III EC Core Content at Level 3
4	Baccalaureate Degree	- Additional 60–64 hours in IECE content - Field experiences, practicum, and/or student teaching	Degree articulates into Level 5 (graduate studies)	IECE teacher performance standards at Level IV EC Core Content at Level 4
5	Master's Degree	- Completion of a master's program - Field experiences, practicum, student teaching and/or internship	Final level; may lead to initial teaching certification or advanced IECE roles	IECE teacher performance standards at Level V EC Core Content at Level 5

EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAINING REGISTRY SYSTEM

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION TRAINING RECORDS INFORMATION SYSTEM (ECE-TRIS)

ECE-TRIS is a custom-built state system for early childhood professionals in Kentucky to track their required professional development training, education, credentials, certifications, badges, and scholarships/grants. ECE-TRIS is an access level-based system serving a variety of professionals in the childcare field. All professionals who request an account will have access to training record reports, personal account details, training calendar, and several application areas are available to all users. Expanded roles include reports to monitor staff learning and maintaining staff rosters. ECE-TRIS is a comprehensive registry that goes beyond the maintenance of an individual's training records. Each process within the system was also designed to support the Division of Child Care, Division of Regulated Child Care, KY All STARS, Governor's Office of Early Childhood, and Kentucky Child Care Aware. The collaborative relationships with various early childhood organizations were instrumental with integrating processes and data into one registry for efficiency, accuracy, and ease of use. Experienced and knowledgeable TRIS staff work closely with the Division of Child Care on regulation and policy and maintain data integrity through best practices for entry.

Additional Application Areas to support the field:

- Kentucky Early Childhood Credentialed Trainer Application.
- Training Request/Approval Process
- Public Calendar of Approved courses
- College Coursework Submissions to articulate to Clock Hours
- Scholarship Applications for Division of Child Care grants for learning milestones.

Data Impact:

- Training Records for individual Professional Learning Portfolios
- Division of Regulated Child Care licensing surveyor related reports to minimize review time by reviewing training records prior to onsite visit.
- KY ALL STARS tracking with TRIS allows users to find training to increase their ALL STARS rating. The system provides ALL STARS Raters access to staff records for determination of rating.
- State and Federal reporting enhanced by quality best practices and TRIS staff maintenance of all records.
- Informs policy and regulations and reactive to changes in policies and regulations.
- Supporting program directors who work with staff to develop professional development plans and verify that staff has met training requirements for Licensing, Certification, All STARS, as well as the Commonwealth Child Care Credential or Trainer Credential renewals.

Each data element in TRIS has been carefully considered to benefit the early childhood field in Kentucky.

WEB SITE RESOURCES

Child Care Aware of Kentucky

<https://www.childcareawareky.org/>

Child Development Associate (CDA) Council for Professional Recognition

<https://www.cdacouncil.org/en/>

Child Development Resources

<https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dcbs/dcc/Pages/parents.aspx>

Division of Child Care Approved Training Agencies

<https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dcbs/dcc/Pages/professionaldevelopment.aspx>

Division of Child Care Professional Development

<https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dcbs/dcc/Pages/professionaldevelopment.aspx>

Division of Regulated Child Care

<https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/os/oig/drcc/Pages/default.aspx>

Early Care & Education Career Pathway

<https://kyecac.ky.gov/career-pathway>

Early Care & Education Training Registry & Information System (ECE TRIS)

<https://ece.trc.ky.gov/>

Family Child Care Network

<https://www.fccnky.com/>

Help Me Grow

<http://www.helpmegrowky.com/>

Human Development Institute HDI Learning

<https://www.hdilearning.org/>

Kentucky All STARS Provider Information

<https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dcbs/dcc/Pages/kyallstarsproviders.aspx>

Kentucky Association for Early Childhood Education (KAECE)

<https://www.mykaece.org/>

Kentucky Community and Technical College System

<https://kctcs.edu/index.aspx#ourcolleges>

Kentucky Early Intervention System

<https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dmch/ecdb/Pages/keis.aspx>

Kentucky Out of School Alliance

<https://kyoutofschoolalliance.org/>

Kentucky Head Start Association

<https://www.facebook.com/HeadStartKY/>

Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) Early Childhood Development Scholarship

<https://www.kheaa.com/web/scholarships-grants.faces#earlyChldDev>

Kentucky Child Care Health Consultation

<https://www.kentuckycchc.org/>

Kentucky Core Content Standards

<https://kyecac.ky.gov/career-pathway>

Kentucky Department of Education

<https://www.education.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Kentucky Traineeship for Special Education

<https://kytraineeship.org/>

National Association for the Education of Young Children

<https://www.naeyc.org/>

National Association for Family Child Care

<https://nafcc.org/>

Work Ready Scholarship Program

<https://workreadykentucky.com/>

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

CDA (Child Development Associate): A nationally recognized credential issued by the Council for Professional Recognition. It validates competency in eight key subject areas essential for ECE professionals.

Kentucky Early Core Content: A foundational framework outlining the knowledge, competencies, and characteristics expected of ECE professionals. It informs training, course development, and competency standards. Organized by training levels and subject areas.

Training Levels (Levels 1–5): Kentucky assigns each ECE training a level from 1 (introductory) to 5 (most advanced), aligned with knowledge and complexity.

Commonwealth Child Care Credential (CCCC): An initial ECE credential awarded after completing 60 hours of approved training in Kentucky.

Director's Credential: Awarded to individuals who complete 12 credit hours of approved instruction through accredited institutions in Kentucky.

KY Early Care and Education Trainer Credential: Credential granted to individuals approved to provide ECE professional development. Trainers can be credentialed at multiple levels, from Level 1 to Specialty Level.

ECE-TRIS: The training record system where ECE professional development hours (including EILA-approved credits) are recorded for participants in Kentucky.

ECE Orientation (6-Hour Mandatory Training): A required online orientation for new ECE professionals covering health & safety, abuse reporting, and recommended practices.

Early Care and Education (ECE): Structured, supervised educational programs for children from birth until age five (or kindergarten entry). High-quality ECE supports development, enhances kindergarten readiness, and benefits families.

Program Types in ECE

Includes:

- Early Head Start (infants/toddlers & pregnant women)
- Head Start (age 3–5)
- Public/Private Preschools
- Licensed Child Care Centers
- Certified Family Child Care Providers

Kentucky All STARS: A quality rating and improvement system (1-5 stars) for child care providers, public preschools, and Head Start. Programs at 3 stars or above are deemed high quality.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP): An educational philosophy that tailors care and instruction to a child's developmental stage and individual context—promoting active, meaningful learning.

IDEA Early Intervention (KEIS): A system (Kentucky Early Intervention System) providing services to infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities under IDEA's Part C. Includes assessment, IFSP development, and periodic review.

Professional Learning (per 704 KAR 3:035)

Defined as:

- Aligned with standards and goals
 - Focused on content/pedagogy
 - Collaborative and educator-facilitated
 - Continuous and improvement-oriented
- A professional development program is a structured, coherent, and measurable learning process.

Required PD Hours: Lead teachers must engage in required professional development days; teaching assistants require at least 18 hours annually, all relevant to young children and families.

ACRONYMS

CCCC: Commonwealth Child Care Credential

CDA: Child Development Associate

DCBS: Department of Community-Based Services

DCC: Division of Child Care

DRCC: Division of Regulated Child Care

ECDS: Early Childhood Development Specialist Journey Worker Credential

ECD Scholarship: Early Childhood Development Scholarship

ECE: Early Childhood Education

ECAC: Early Childhood Advisory Council

ECAD: Early Childhood Administrator Director Journey Worker Credential

ECED: Early Childhood Educator Journey Worker Credential

ECE-TRIS: Early Care and Education-Training Record Information System

ECSSS: Early Childhood Student Support Specialist Journey Worker Credential

EHS: Early Head Start

EPSB: Educational Professional Standards Board

FCCN: Family Child Care Network

GED: General Education Diploma

GOEC: Governor's Office of Early Childhood

HS: Head Start

IECE: Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education

KCTCS: Kentucky Community and Technical College System

KDE: Kentucky Department of Education

KHEAA: Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority

KYOSA: Kentucky Out of School Alliance

LMS: Learning Management System

NAA: National AfterSchool Association

PAHT: Pediatric Abusive Head Trauma

PD: Professional Development

PL: Professional Learning

RTC: Regional Training Center

T/TA: Training and Technical Assistance

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