



RESOURCE GUIDE: CHILD CARE WORKFORCE QUALIFICATIONS, TRAINING, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Working in the child care field can be exciting and rewarding, and it presents an opportunity to have an impact on the lives of children and their families in your community. Research has demonstrated the significance of a child's early years for brain development. It has also confirmed that one key to high-quality child care is having skilled adults in the program who can form strong relationships with the young children in their care.

If you are thinking about starting a career in the child care field, or taking on a different role, you might need to meet some specific qualifications before beginning your work with young children. The information in this resource guide is designed to help you identify the education, training, and experience you need to qualify for a teaching or administrative role in a child care center or to operate a family child care (FCC) program in your home. Information is also included to help you locate training and professional development opportunities in your community, connect you with membership organizations in the early care and education field, and identify other resources in your State that may be useful to your professional development.

Please note that the information in this guide is specific to the qualifications and training needed to work directly with children or as an administrator in the **licensed child care market**—settings such as child care centers and FCC homes that must meet State* licensing requirements. Please be aware that there are many other settings and roles in the early care and education field that have their own qualification requirements. Also, individual child care programs may have their own policies for hiring staff.

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The CCSSS Network does not endorse any non-Federal organization, publication, or resource.

* For the purposes of this document, the District of Columbia is included when referring to “States” and not listed separately.

Types of licensed child care settings

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There are two common types of child care settings that are part of the licensed child care market—**child care centers** and **FCC homes**.

Child care centers are facilities where care typically is provided to children in a nonresidential building with different age group classrooms. Care is provided for less than 24 hours per day. State child care licensing regulations include definitions of the types of child care centers that must meet licensing requirements. These definitions often include a minimum number of children or a minimum number of hours the facility operates to determine whether it must be licensed.

FCC homes are facilities where care typically is provided to children in the provider's residence. FCC homes usually provide care for a small group of children of mixed ages and have one care provider. As with centers, States have definitions of the types of FCC homes that must be licensed. These definitions are usually based on the number of children in care. For example, several States require FCC homes to be licensed if the provider cares for at least one unrelated child or the children from one family, but many States also allow homes with three or more children to operate without a license. Many States license two types of FCC homes—a **small home** that has a small number of children and usually one care provider, and a **large or group home** that usually has a larger number of children and a provider and assistant.

The types of child care settings that are required to be licensed can be very different from State to State. You can find out about your State's requirements by contacting the State child care licensing agency. The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education (NRC) has State licensing regulations and contact information for all licensing agencies on its Web site at <http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm>.

State requirements for child care facilities

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Licensing is a process administered by State governments that gives permission to child care facilities to operate. Licensing sets a baseline of requirements below which it is illegal to operate, unless the facility is legally exempt from licensing. States have regulations that include the requirements child care centers and FCC homes must comply with and policies to support the enforcement of those regulations. These regulations and enforcement policies vary widely from State to State. Some States may call this regulatory process "certification" or "registration." For the purposes of this guide, the terms "licensing" or "licensed" are used to represent all of the State regulatory processes.

State child care licensing regulations help protect the health and safety of children in out-of-home care. Licensing helps prevent different forms of harm to children, including risks from the spread of disease, fire, and other building safety hazards, and injury. Licensing also helps prevent developmental impairment from children's lack of healthy relationships with adults, and regulates adequate supervision and developmentally appropriate activities. The NRC has State licensing regulations and contact information for all licensing agencies on its Web site at <http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm>.

Within the licensing regulations for centers and FCC homes are requirements for the people who work there. As explained further in this guide, these requirements include specific qualifications, such as being a certain age, training and/or education to complete prior to working in a facility, training to complete after being hired, health requirements, and background checks, among other things.

Role Names in State Regulations

States vary in the names they use for the **teacher** role in child care licensing regulations. The following are some of the names States use:

- Assistant group supervisor;
- Associate teacher;
- Caretaker;
- Child care worker;
- Group teacher;
- Primary caregiver;
- Senior staff;
- Teacher;
- Assistant to head of group;
- Caregiver;
- Child care supervisor;
- Group leader;
- Lead caregiver;
- Program leader;
- Staff; and
- Teacher assistant.

Common roles in child care centers and FCC

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There are several different roles you can fulfill if you are working in a child care setting. These are the most common:

Child Care Center Roles:

- Teacher;
- Master teacher;
- Assistant teacher;
- Aide; and
- Director.

FCC Home Roles:

- Small FCC home provider;
- Large or Group FCC home provider; and
- FCC assistant.

The most common staff role for **child care centers** is **teacher**, which can be defined as a staff person who can be solely responsible for a group of children. States may use other names for this role, such as caregiver, child care worker, or group leader.

Role Names in State Regulations

States vary in the names they use for the **master teacher** role in child care licensing regulations. The following are some of the names States use:

- Assistant director;
- Child care associate;
- Fully qualified teacher;
- Group supervisor;
- Head of group;
- Head teacher;
- Lead caregiver;
- Lead teacher;
- Master teacher; and
- Teacher.

Some States require at least one teacher in a program or classroom to be qualified at a higher level. This position is often called a lead teacher, head teacher, chief caregiver, fully qualified teacher, child care associate, or supervisor. This role is generically labeled **master teacher** in this guide to reflect that this person is required to have more training, experience, or skills than other teachers.

Many States also have requirements for **assistant teachers** and **aides** who work with children in child care centers under the supervision of an individual who is qualified as a teacher or master teacher.

A director of a child care center is the administrator who is ultimately responsible for establishing the program, choosing and supervising all other staff, managing both income and expenditures, and maintaining program quality.

If you wish to operate a child care program in your home, typically called **FCC**, your role would be a **FCC provider**. Some States have more than one type of FCC home. A **small FCC home** is a child care program located in a residence, generally with one provider and a small number of children. A **large or group FCC home** is also typically located in a residence, but usually has one provider and an **assistant** and a larger number of children. States vary in how they name these types of child care facilities and in how they define which ones must be licensed.

State requirements for providers in child care programs [Back](#)

To find out the requirements for child care center staff and FCC home providers in your State, you can contact the State child care licensing agency. The NRC has State licensing regulations and contact information for all licensing agencies on its Web site at <http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm>.

The following are explanations of the different types of licensing requirements you might have to meet to work in a child care center or FCC home.

Minimum Age Requirements

Most States require child care center staff and FCC providers to be a certain age to work in or operate a program legally. The child care licensing regulations will include this age. For example, most States require child care center directors to be at least 21 years old, teachers to be at least 18 years old, and assistant teachers and aides to be at least 16 years old.

High School Diploma or Equivalent

Many States require center staff and FCC providers to have a high school diploma or equivalent, such as passing the General Education Development Test (GED), prior to working in or operating a program. This is especially true in States where the minimum age requirement for a particular role is 18 years old.

Training and education requirements in early childhood education [Back](#)

Many States require providers to have **preservice qualifications**—training or education in early care and education topics completed prior to working in, operating, or assuming a new role in a licensed child care program. The amount of training or education required varies widely from State to State. The National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) maintains information in the licensing study about minimum training or education required by State licensing agencies to qualify for center director, teacher, master teacher, and FCC provider roles. This information can be found in the document entitled “The 50-State Child Care Licensing Study 2011-2013 Edition,” available at http://naralicensing.org/Resources/Documents/2011-2013_CCLS.pdf.

Most State child care licensing regulations include many options for qualifying for a particular role. State licensing agencies have procedures they use to evaluate the qualifications of providers seeking to work in child care centers or operate FCC homes.

Work Experience

In addition to preservice qualifications for training and education, many States require that center staff and FCC providers come to their roles with some experience working with children. Some States require experience as the only qualification for a particular role, while others combine experience with education and training in their qualifications. State child care licensing regulations typically specify the amount of experience required and might specify that people verify that the experience was in a particular setting, was with a certain age group of children, and was supervised.

Orientation

Many States require new employees, especially in child care centers, to complete an orientation training that includes information about the facility's policies and procedures. This orientation is often given by the director of the center or the operator of the FCC home. State licensing regulations often specify the content of this training. States also require center staff and FCC home providers to complete training about the licensing process and regulations.

Ongoing Training Hours

Most States require child care center staff and FCC providers to complete a specific number of hours of training each year. The content of this training is generally related to the care and education of young children and is completed through a variety of methods, such as adult education courses, college courses, conference workshops, distance learning, and in-service training provided by the center director or FCC home operator. Child care licensing regulations include the specific number of hours of required training and any requirements for training content.

Health and Safety Training

In addition to the annual ongoing training hours, most States require child care staff to complete training in first aid and CPR. Many States also require training in other health and safety topics, such as the following:

- Administration of medication;
- Care of sick children;
- Child abuse and neglect prevention and reporting;
- Fire safety;
- Hand washing;
- Prevention of HIV/AIDS and blood-borne pathogens;
- Prevention of the spread of communicable diseases (universal precautions);
- Reducing the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS); and
- Water safety or lifeguard training.

Health Requirements

Most States require child care center staff and FCC providers to show proof that they are physically fit to care for children. To show they are in good health, staff and providers may need to provide the licensing agency with statements from physicians, reports of physical examinations, or proof of immunizations and tuberculosis tests.

Background Checks

Many States require that people who work in child care centers and FCC homes have not committed a crime or been accused of abuse or neglect of children in their care. States often require staff and providers to undergo at least one type of criminal background check, either a check of criminal history records (which may be done with fingerprints), child abuse and neglect registries, or sex offender registries.

Trainings that meet state licensing requirements

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State licensing agencies have ways to evaluate the qualifications of staff in child care centers and FCC homes. You can contact the licensing agency in your State to find out whether the training that you have completed or plan to complete will meet State requirements. The NRC has State licensing regulations and contact information for all licensing agencies on its Web site at <http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm>.

Community resources to help decide on a child care career

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Many States have a **professional development system** that provides information, support, and other resources to help people who work, or may want to work, in the early care and education field. These State systems vary widely in the services and resources they offer. Your State's professional development system may include some of the following resources:

- Career counseling and other professional development planning tools;
- A registry to track the training that you have obtained;
- A training calendar or database of state-approved trainers and training sessions;
- Core knowledge or competency documents that define what providers need to know, understand, and be able to do to work effectively with young children; or
- A career lattice or ladder that defines pathways to help you better understand the variety of roles, responsibilities, and requirements within the early care and education field in your State.

Finding trainings that meet the state requirements

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Local child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies can provide information about training opportunities, professional development initiatives, and other resources in your area. Child Care Aware offers a Child Care Finder tool that provides contact information for all State and local CCR&R agencies at <http://childcareaware.org/parents-and-guardians/childcarefinder#section=searchbyzip>.

In addition, many States have systems that provide information about training and other resources to help people who work in the early care and education field grow professionally. Many of these systems have a training calendar or database of trainers or training sessions.

Scholarships or other financial assistance available to help pay for trainings [Back](#)

Scholarship Resources

Local CCR&R agencies support child care providers with training and technical assistance to help improve the quality of child care, and they may have information about scholarships. Child Care Aware offers a Child Care Finder tool that provides contact information for all State and local CCR&R agencies at <http://childcareaware.org/parents-and-guardians/childcarefinder#section=searchbyzip>.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project Scholarships

Child Care Services Association

Phone: 919-967-3272

Web site: <http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach.html>

The T.E.A.C.H. [Teacher Education and Compensation Helps] Early Childhood Project gives scholarships to child care workers to complete coursework in early childhood education and to increase their compensation. The project is an umbrella for a variety of different scholarship programs for teachers, directors, and FCC providers working in regulated child care programs in 25 States across the country. All T.E.A.C.H. scholarships link continuing education with increased compensation and require recipients and their sponsoring child care programs to share the cost.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project is currently operating in the following 25 States: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina (founding State), Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. State contacts are available at <http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach-nc/state-contacts/>.

Federal Financial Aid

Federal Student Aid Information Center

U.S. Department of Education

Phone: 800-4-FED-AID (800-433-3243)

TTY: 800-730-8913

Web site: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/>

The U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid programs are the largest source of student financial aid in the United States, providing nearly 70 percent of all student aid. Available resources are described in the following publication:

- *Funding Your Education: The Guide to Federal Student Aid* is a comprehensive resource about student financial aid. Grants, loans, and work-study are the three major forms of aid available through the Department of Education's Federal Student Aid office. Updated each award year, the guide explains the programs and how to apply for them. It is available at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sites/default/files/funding-your-education.pdf>, and in Spanish at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sites/default/files/funding-your-education-spanish.pdf>.

To apply for Federal aid and many other state student aid programs, students must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Information about the FAFSA is available at <http://studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa>.

Obtaining a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential

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States commonly allow someone to qualify for a teaching or administrative role in a child care facility if they have obtained a CDA credential. The CDA is a competency-based credential awarded to those who work with children ages birth to 5 years old. A CDA may be earned in three settings: center based (with two age groups, children younger than 3- years old and children 3 to 5 years old); FCC; and home visitor. In addition, a candidate may earn a bilingual specialization. The CDA Credentialing Program is administered by the Council for Professional Recognition. For additional information, call the Council at 800-424-4310, email cdafeedback@cdacouncil.org, or visit the Web at <http://www.cdacouncil.org/>.

Early care and education membership organizations and professional associations

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The following are membership organizations that focus on early childhood issues. These organizations also have publications and resource materials available to the public.

American Montessori Society

116 East 16th Street
New York, NY 10003-2163
Phone: 212-358-1250
Email: ams@amshq.org
Web site: <http://www.amshq.org/>

National Association for Family Child Care

1743 W. Alexander Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84119
Phone: 801-886-2322
Web site: <http://nafcc.org/>

Council for Exceptional Children

Division of Early Childhood
2900 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000
Arlington, VA 22202-3557
Toll free: 888-232-7733
TTY: 866-915-5000
Web site: www.cec.sped.org

National Child Care Association

1325 G Street NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
Toll free: 800-543-7161
Web site: <http://www.nccanet.org/>

National AfterSchool Association

2961A Hunter Mill Road, #626
Oakton, VA 22124
Email: info@naaweb.org
Web site: <http://naaweb.org/>

National Head Start Association

1651 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone: 703-739-0875
Toll free: 866-677-8724
Web site: <http://www.nhsa.org/>

National Association for the Education of Young Children

1313 L Street, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202-232-8777
Toll free: 800-424-2460
Web site: www.naeyc.org

Additional resources about careers in child care

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The following resources provide a starting point for exploring the range of career opportunities in early childhood education, and links to national organizations.

- *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2014), by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor, is designed to provide valuable assistance to those making decisions about their future work lives. For additional information, visit <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>.
- *Who Are These People? A Guide for Child Care Professionals* (2003), by the National Academy of Sciences, is a booklet about early childhood development and education for adults who care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. For additional information, call 888-624-8373 or visit www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10696.
- *National Directory of Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Institutions* (n.d.), by the Council for Professional Recognition and the National Center for Early Development and Learning, contains listings for nearly 1,400 2- and 4-year colleges. This resource is available at <http://www.cdacouncil.org/resource-center/national-training-directory>. For additional information, call the Council for Professional Recognition at 800-424-4310 or 202-265-9090.
- The **National Association for the Education of Young Children** produces many publications for early childhood professionals, including resources about program administration, relationships with families, professional development, the early childhood profession, careers, developmentally appropriate practice, and public policy and advocacy. To access the publications, visit <http://www.naeyc.org/publications>.

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