



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Child Development Staff Education Requirements Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Early Childhood Staff

March 2023

Overview

In December 2016, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) published updated [child care licensing regulations](#) that increased the [education requirements](#) for the early childhood workforce to ensure that staff meet the necessary qualifications and credentials to educate young children. More information on the education requirements and available resources and supports for [center directors](#), [teachers](#), [assistant teachers](#), [expanded home caregivers](#), [home caregivers](#) and [associate home caregivers](#) can be found below.

OSSE's [Early Childhood Education \(ECE\) Help Desk](#) is available to answer questions, share resources, assist with planning and offer individual assistance to early childhood educators. Please contact the ECE Help Desk at ECehelpdesk@dc.gov or (202) 478-5903 for support.

Background and History

1. Why is OSSE implementing education requirements for the DC early childhood workforce?

The first three years of life are the most [rapid and critical period of development](#) for a child's brain. Research shows high-quality early childhood experiences help children prepare for school and have lifelong, positive effects and that teacher qualifications have an [impact on quality](#). OSSE's goal in updating licensing regulations in 2016 was to protect the health, safety and welfare of children in care and cultivate high-quality learning environments and experiences that nurture children's learning. The education requirements included in the regulations support these goals by ensuring that all early childhood educators have training in child development and that those in lead teacher, expanded home caregiver and director roles have additional knowledge and skills necessary to create high-quality learning experiences for children and supervise other staff to deliver quality early learning programs.

2. How did OSSE determine the education requirement for each staff type?

The education requirements published in December 2016 align with national recommendations set forth in [Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs](#), which

were informed by research and the expertise of physicians and practitioners. In December 2015, OSSE requested feedback from the early learning community and stakeholders regarding the proposed rulemaking to increase education requirements for the early childhood workforce. OSSE used the insights and feedback shared by stakeholders to refine and improve the previous proposed rule and draft revisions.

Education Requirements

3. What is the education requirement for each staff type and when does an educator have to meet the requirement?

The education requirement and deadline for achieving the credential for each staff type can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Requirements for Child Development Facility Staff

	Position	Degree/Credential	Effective Date
Center-Based	Director	Bachelor’s degree in early childhood education (including early childhood development, early childhood education, elementary education, or early special education) or a bachelor’s degree in any subject area with at least 15 semester credit hours in early childhood education.	Dec. 2, 2022
	Teacher	Associate degree in early childhood education (or early childhood development, child and family studies, or a closely related field) or an associate degree (or higher) in any subject area with at least 24 semester credit hours in early childhood.	Dec. 2, 2023
	Assistant Teacher	Child Development Associate (CDA) or an associate degree (or higher) in any subject area.	Dec. 2, 2023
Home- Based	Expanded Home Caregiver	Associate degree in early childhood education (or early childhood development, child and family studies or a closely related field) or an associate degree (or higher) in any subject area with at least 24 semester credit hours in early childhood.	Dec. 2, 2023
	Home Caregiver and Associate Home Caregiver	CDA	Dec. 2, 2023

4. I work at a child development facility in DC that is licensed by OSSE, but I'm not sure what staff type I am. What should I do?

If you are unsure of your staff type, please talk with your employer. Your employer is required to keep track of this information in the Division of Early Learning Licensing Tool (DELLT), OSSE's child development facility licensing system.

5. I am an early childhood educator who is enrolled in a program to meet the education requirement for my staff type, but I will not complete the program by Dec. 2, 2023. What should I do?

Please talk with your employer about your anticipated timeline for achieving the credential required for your position. Your employer may apply for a [waiver](#) on your behalf. Please note, individual early childhood educators cannot apply for a waiver. Waivers must be submitted by the leader of the child development facility where you are employed.

6. I work at a child development facility and do not meet the education requirement for my staff type. I am not currently enrolled in a program to meet the education requirement. What should I do?

If you do not meet the education requirement for your staff type and are not currently pursuing coursework to achieve the required credential, please contact the [ECE Help Desk](#) at ECEhelpdesk@dc.gov or (202) 478-5903 as soon as possible. The ECE Help Desk can support you to develop a plan to meet the education requirement for your staff type. The ECE Help Desk can also help you identify resources and supports such as scholarship opportunities to help you achieve the required credential.

7. What will happen if I do not meet the education requirement for my staff type by the deadline?

Every licensed child care provider participates in monitoring visits conducted by OSSE's licensing and compliance unit to ensure they meet licensing and health and safety requirements. Providers receive one announced visit and one unannounced visit each year. If the licensing specialist finds problems or violations during the visit, including staff who do not meet the education requirement for their staff type, the provider will receive a licensing deficiency. The provider must create a corrective action plan and make changes by the required deadline and the staff member must take actionable steps toward meeting the education requirement for their position (e.g., enroll in a CDA program or enroll in a degree program, etc.). For more information about the child care provider monitoring and inspection process, please [click here](#).

8. I am a teacher at a child development center and I have a bachelor's degree in a field other than early childhood education. Do I need to obtain an associate degree?

If you currently have a degree that is not in early childhood education, OSSE can review your transcript(s) to see if you have completed 24 semester hours in ECE,

which would meet the teacher minimum education requirement even if your major was in another field. OSSE will review the transcript, and if the qualifications are met, issue a Credential Verification Certificate. The request for a transcript review (e.g., credential verification) can be made through the Professional Development Information System (PDIS) at dcpdis.org, by clicking the “Apply for a Credential Verification Certificate” once the user has logged in.

9. I have an associate degree in an area other than early childhood education, do I need to obtain a CDA?

If you have an associate degree in a field other than early childhood education, you meet the minimum education requirement for an assistant teacher, home caregiver or associate home caregiver. If you are in one of these staff types, you do not need to obtain a CDA credential. If you are a center director, teacher or expanded home caregiver, please see question 3.

10. I have a degree/credential from another country. Do I meet the education requirement?

OSSE recognizes degrees awarded in foreign countries provided that the foreign credential is evaluated for US equivalency. This should be done through an organization that has a current membership with the [National Association of Credential Evaluation Services](http://www.naces.org) (NACES) or the [Association of International Credential Evaluators](http://www.aice-usa.org) (AICE). Examples of such organizations are World Education Services (WES) and SpanTran. You may reach out the NACES or AICE organization of your choosing to obtain more information about foreign credential evaluations. There may be a fee associated with foreign credential evaluation and/or translation that you must pay to vendor you select to conduct the evaluation/translation. You may contact the [ECE Help Desk](mailto:ECEhelpdesk@dc.gov) at ECEhelpdesk@dc.gov or (202) 478-5903 for support identifying an organization to evaluate equivalency.

Please note, the [DC Leading Educators toward Advanced Degrees \(DC LEAD\) program](http://www.dclead.org) offers funding to cover the cost of foreign credential evaluation and/or translation if you will use it for college/university admission to complete a degree or needed credits to meet the minimum education requirement. For questions about DC LEAD foreign credential translation and evaluation supports, please contact DC LEAD at DCLEAD@sechildrensfund.org or (202) 561-5500.

11. I have worked in early childhood education for a long time. Are there waivers for early childhood educators based on experience?

Center directors, expanded home caregivers and teachers who have continuously served in the same (or comparable) role/position since December 2006 or earlier, without a significant gap in service, may qualify for a [10-year continuous service waiver](#). To receive the 10 years of continuous service waiver, a center director, expanded home caregiver or teacher must show that they had 10 years of continuous service as of December 2016 when the licensing regulations were

published. This experience does not need to be in the same child development facility in which the early childhood educator is currently employed. All waivers must be submitted by the facility leader. Waivers are processed on a case-by-case basis and are not guaranteed. OSSE reserves the right to grant or deny a waiver in accordance with the regulations. All early childhood educators are strongly encouraged to take advantage of educational opportunities that are available.

Supports for Meeting the New Education Requirements

12. I need to get a CDA to meet the education requirement for my staff type. What supports are available to obtain a CDA credential?

There are several options for an early childhood educator to achieve the CDA credential at no cost to you. OSSE supports two programs, operated by [CentroNía and Southeast Children's Fund](#), that offer free, in-person and/or hybrid CDA training and preparation programs for early childhood professionals seeking an initial, renewal or non-cohort CDA credential. CentroNía provides CDA training and preparation in English, Spanish and Amharic. For more information, contact Jennifer Salgado, bilingual CDA coordinator, at jsalgado@centronia.org or (202) 948-6851 or Kamila Johnson, program manager, at southeastcda@gmail.com or (202) 561-1100. Another option is offered through [Quorum eLearning](#), a membership-based online professional development platform that includes all of the 120 training hours needed to obtain or renew a CDA credential. A [guidebook](#) on how to obtain a CDA credential using Quorum is also available. For more information on Quorum, contact Help@QuorumLearning.com or (404) 325-2225. Please note, a person pursuing a CDA through an OSSE-sponsored program needs to have a high school diploma and be a DC resident or work at a child development facility in DC.

There are also several other programs in the DC region that offer CDA credential coursework, such as [Briya Public Charter School](#), the [United Planning Organization \(UPO\)](#), [University of the District of Columbia's \(UDC's\) Division of Workforce Development and Lifelong Learning](#), [Trinity Washington University](#) and [American University](#). Individuals interested in pursuing one of these programs should contact the program directly.

For assistance determining the CDA program that is right for you, contact the [ECE Help Desk](#) at ECEhelpdesk@dc.gov or (202) 478-5903.

13. How long does it take to obtain a CDA credential?

The length of time it takes for a person to obtain a CDA depends upon the individual and the program selected. Typically, it can take between six months and one year to meet all the requirements for obtaining a CDA.

14. Are there options for obtaining a CDA credential online?

Yes. [Quorum eLearning](#) is a membership-based online professional development platform that includes all 120 training hours needed to obtain or renew a CDA

credential. Once an eligible early childhood educator completes CDA coursework, OSSE's CDA grantees, [CentroNia and Southeast Children's Fund](#), can provide funding and assistance to complete the CDA portfolio and assessment. More information can be found in this [guidebook](#) on how to obtain a CDA credential using Quorum. For more information on Quorum, contact Help@QuorumLearning.com or (404) 325-2225. Please note, a person pursuing a CDA through Quorum needs to have a high school diploma and be a DC resident or work at a child development facility in DC.

15. Can the associate or bachelor's degree requirement be completed using Quorum?

No. Early childhood educators can use Quorum to complete the 120 clock hours needed to earn a CDA credential. Early childhood educators who complete CDA coursework via Quorum, along with other requirements to earn a CDA, and subsequently enroll in an institution of higher education, may be able to receive some college credits that apply towards their associate or bachelor's degree based on completion of CDA coursework (see question 16 for additional information).

16. I have a CDA credential. Can it count towards credits at a college or university? Universities in the DC region (District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia) have different criteria for accepting the CDA toward college credit. It is best to contact the university where you are enrolled or are interested in enrolling directly and ask how many college credits may be awarded for a person with a CDA credential as well as any other associated costs or requirements.

17. Are there scholarship opportunities for early childhood educator who are employed in a staff type that require an associates or bachelor's degree, such as center directors, center teachers and expanded home caregivers, to pay for coursework?

OSSE understands that continuing education can be costly and has dedicated funds, time and resources to support the DC early childhood workforce to achieve the required credentials. Examples of scholarship opportunities for individuals pursuing an associate or bachelor's degree include:

- The [DC Futures program](#) helps DC college students complete their first associate or bachelor's degree by providing a last-dollar scholarship (tuition, fees and cost of attendance) at three local universities in addition to college coaching and support services that will address personal and financial barriers to completion for all participants.
- [Mayor's Scholars Undergraduate Program](#) provides need-based funding for eligible DC residents earning their first associate or bachelor's degree at select area colleges and universities. The program is a last-dollar award, meaning it can be used to fill the gap between a student's financial aid package and the cost of attendance.
- [DC Tuition Assistance Grant](#) (DCTAG) is a student-level grant program that provides grants of up to \$10,000 toward the difference between in-

state and out-of-state tuition at public colleges and universities to eligible DC residents.

- If you plan to apply for the [Mayor's Scholars Undergraduate Program](#) or the [DC Futures Program](#), OSSE recommends applying to DCTAG first.
- The [DC LEAD program](#) provides scholarships and incentives to child care educators in the District of Columbia to complete coursework toward an associate and/or bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

More information these scholarships and other resources can be found at osse.dc.gov/eceresources. Please contact the [ECE Help Desk](#) at ECEhelpdesk@dc.gov or (202) 478-5903 for support identifying the scholarship opportunities that is right for

18. Are there online degree options available for obtaining an associate or bachelor's degree?

There are several associate and bachelor's degree programs offered online. Higher education programs in the DC area that may have online programs can be found on the following webpages in the Program section:

- Center director: osse.dc.gov/page/center-director
- Teacher: osse.dc.gov/page/teacher
- Expanded home caregiver: osse.dc.gov/page/expanded-home-caregiver

Early childhood educators with questions about these programs should contact the program directly.

Wages/Salary

19. After I achieve my education credential, will I receive more money from AidKit for the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund?

In fiscal year 2023 (FY23), which occurs between Oct. 1, 2022 and Sept. 30, 2023, OSSE and AidKit are distributing supplemental payments directly to eligible early childhood educators through the [Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund](#). In FY23, [eligible](#) early childhood educators can receive up to four payments. The payment amount an early childhood educator receives is based on their staff type and employment status (e.g., part-time vs. full-time). An educator's staff type is based on their responsibilities at the facility where they are employed and their qualifications. If your staff type changes before May 15, 2023 (quarter three deadline) or Aug. 15 (quarter four deadline) and is updated by your employer in DELLT, you will receive the payment amount for that staff type. *Please note that completing a degree or credential does not automatically move you to a new staff type:* That is a decision your employer will make based on your responsibilities in the facility and the employer's needs.

Starting in FY24, which begins Oct. 1, 2023, OSSE will shift to distributing funds to child development facilities; facilities that accept funds will be required to pay eligible early childhood educators wages that reflect the recommendations of the

Early Childhood Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force, which include higher levels of compensation for staff based on staff type and credentials. More information about these salaries and requirements for providers and eligible staff will be available in spring 2023.

20. What is my employer required to pay me?

Every licensed child development facility is required to adhere to all applicable federal and DC government laws and regulations. This includes the minimum wage and living wage rates that are set by DC. For more information about the minimum wage and living wage rates, please visit the [Office of Wage Hour Compliance website](#).

Starting in FY24 (which runs from Oct. 1, 2023-Sept. 30, 2024) child development facilities that participate in the [Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund](#) will be required to pay their staff wages or salaries that meet or exceed the minimum required by the fund. More information about the fund, including the timeline on which staff can expect to see higher compensation reflected in their paychecks, will be available in spring and summer 2023. Employers are not required to participate in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, and the enrollment process for child care employers to participate in the fund has not yet begun. You will need to check with your employer in summer or fall 2023 to find out if they are participating in the program.