

More than “Getting Clock Hours” The Value of Continuing Education



All professions have entry level and continuing education requirements. Entry level requirements for early childhood professionals such as specialized degrees and credentials are important but so are continuing education and support. Continuing education ensures that early childhood professionals are continuously strengthening their knowledge of early childhood concepts and best practices.

Continuing education is more than “getting clock hours”. The topics and content levels should be intentionally selected. Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the concepts learned are used to provide quality experiences for young children and their families. This connection from theory to practice is critical.

Here are frequently asked questions about continuing education:

1. Why is Continuing Education Important?

Research shows that early childhood professionals with specialized training **AND** higher education/professional credentials are more likely to create quality experiences for young children and their families. All staff in early childhood programs must provide evidence that they are receiving specialized training via continuing education and professional development activities. Annual continuing education requirements may vary depending on the type of program (subsidized child care, Head Start, publicly funded Pre-K, etc).

The Office of Early Childhood Education (ECE) certifies competent individuals and organizations to train early childhood professionals. Trainers are selected based on their education and experience in the field. **Only trainings delivered by ECE certified trainers, accredited colleges/universities or other ECE approved sources are acceptable. For a list of approved trainers, visit [the roster](#).**

2. I Have Acquired Many Continuing Education Hours by Attending Workshops and Conferences, Do I Still Need an Early Childhood Degree or Credential?

Yes, continuing education and degrees or other approved credentials are valuable and interconnected. Higher education degrees ensure that professionals have the required content knowledge, skills and disposition. Continuing education provides ongoing training and support. Think of higher education degree and credentials as a car you own and continuing education as the required maintenance (oil change, engine check, etc.).

3. What Counts as Continuing Education?

Professional Development Training/Clock Hours – At minimum, training participants receive Professional Development Training Hours for the total length of the training. This is commonly referred to as “clock hours”.

Continuing Education Units (CEUs) – A CEU is participation in a recognized continuing education program. Some colleges, universities and ECE certified training organizations can award CEUs. 1 CEU = 10 Professional Development Training/Clock Hours. See question 4 for additional guidelines.

Academic Credit Hours – Colleges and universities award academic credit hours after a course of studies has been successfully completed. 1 academic credit = 15 Professional Development Training/Clock Hours. Most college courses are 3 academic credit hours. See question 4 for additional guidelines.

4. Are There Additional Guidelines or Recommendations?

If seeking CEU's, ECE certified training organizations authorized by the [International Association for Continuing Education & Training](#) (IACET) or colleges/universities accredited by *regional* accrediting bodies, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) are highly recommended.

If seeking Academic Credit Hours, colleges/universities accredited by *regional* accrediting bodies, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) are highly recommended. Read more **accreditation**. <http://www2.ed.gov/students/prep/college/diplomamills/diploma-mills.html>