

Is a test required to be certified?

No test is currently required to obtain certification.

How much does it cost?

All pilot participants can become certified at no charge. After the pilot project the following certification fee schedule will apply.

Certification Fees

Initial Certification - \$50

Assignment of certification level through confirmation of credit-bearing education

Recertification - \$25

Certification of applicant's education and continuing education at the current or new certification level

What steps are required to become certified?

Step 1: Complete and sign your application.

Step 2: Attach all official transcripts to your application.

Step 3: Make a copy of all materials for your files.

Step 4: Mail to: NC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, PO Box 959 Chapel Hill, NC 27514

How long is my certification valid?

Certification is valid for a period of time based on the amount of education you possess when you become certified for the first time. If you obtain more education in between recertification periods you may choose to submit your official transcripts to the Institute to increase your certification level. As with all professions, certified individuals must continue their education to maintain their professional certification.

Why am I required to continue my education?

All professionals must continue to refresh their knowledge and build new skills to be effective in their work.

The goal of continuing education at level 5 and below is to increase content knowledge and/or attain a college degree through formal credits (regionally accredited semester hours) at a rate of 6 semester credit hours per certification period.

For level 6 and above, a certified professional must complete 6 formal college credits or 10 continuing education units, or a combination of the two. If a Certified Early Educator at either level 9 or 10 teaches in a higher education system, s/he can get credit for teaching rather than having to complete formal coursework.

Can I apply if I am not currently employed as an early childhood educator in North Carolina?

All persons who are currently or considering working in the field of early childhood education are eligible to become certified by submitting the required paperwork. Out-of-state applicants may apply for North Carolina Early Educator Certification with the submission of the required paperwork.

Will my wages increase?

YES! In most counties in North Carolina salary supplements are available through the Child Care WAGE\$® Project or another Smart Start-funded salary supplement. Those supplements increase as you earn more education. In addition, in general, the more education you have the more you are likely to earn.

What resources are available to help me pay for early childhood college courses and plan my career?

- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarships (www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach.html)
- See www.ncchildcare.org for career and education planning tools!

North Carolina Institute For Early Childhood Professional Development

PO Box 959, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

Professional Certification: The Next Step for Early Childhood Educators



North Carolina Institute
for Early Childhood
Professional Development

Early childhood teachers are undervalued and underpaid.

Even with a college degree, the work of an early childhood teacher is not acknowledged by society for its important role in supporting child development and the early care and education needs of thousands of families every day.

Early childhood is a strong, growing, satisfying career with employment opportunities available across North Carolina.

Over 50,000 early childhood teachers and teacher assistants, school age and family child care providers, administrators, faculty, specialists, coordinators, trainers, consultants and researchers in North Carolina compose our state's early childhood workforce.

Each year more and more teachers, family child care providers and administrators are going to college for the first time or going back to school to learn more. Today, over 17,000 teachers, directors and family child care providers are college students.

How have other occupations become professions?

School teachers have it, nurses have it, hair dressers have it, even plumbers have it! Almost all occupations in the United States require their workforce to become certified to be part of the profession. Early childhood is a profession with a specialized body of knowledge and defined skills required of each position.

Are you ready to be part of a profession?

North Carolina is the first in the nation to increase its workforce professional development standards by certifying the education of those who work directly with, intend to work with, and/or work on the behalf of children ages 0 – 12.

What organization certifies early childhood educators in NC?

The NC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development (Institute), founded in 1993, is the certifying body for the early childhood profession in North Carolina.

The mission of the Institute is to define and advocate for the implementation of a **comprehensive** early childhood professional development system that

provides supportive, accessible, and **individually** appropriate education which is **linked to compensation** in order to ensure high quality care and education services for children and families.

To learn more about the Institute go to:

www.ncchildcare.org

Why should I get certified?

As with other occupations, certification recognizes, rewards and validates professional accomplishments of those working in a particular role in the field of early childhood education. We all benefit when the education of those working in a profession increases.

◆ *Individuals benefit!*

- The more education you have the higher your wages can go!
- Certification increases professional recognition.
- Certification encourages and empowers you to be responsible for your own professional development activities.
- Certification provides you with career mobility and job opportunities.

◆ *Children benefit!*

- Research has shown that the higher the education of the teacher, the better the outcome for children. When teachers have more college education....
 - Children are served in higher quality settings.¹
 - Children are served in developmentally appropriate settings.²
 - Children are less likely to be abused and neglected.³

◆ *Programs benefit!*

- A centralized certification system reduces administrative workload.
- Certification provides a workforce recruitment tool for new hires.
- Certification increases responsibility for individual actions in the classroom.

¹ North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project (<http://ncrlap.uncg.edu>)

² North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project (<http://ncrlap.uncg.edu>)

³ North Carolina Abuse & Neglect Statistics 2001-02 and 2002-03 provided by Child Care Services Association, Chapel Hill, NC

What is certification?

Early childhood educator certification is the process of verifying college education. A professional certification level will be assigned using the education documentation submitted and an existing scale. Information about the scale can be accessed through project staff.

For a list of regionally accredited college and university programs go to:

www.cha.org/Directories/regional.asp

Education is the basis for Early Educator Certification. Education is coursework taken at a **regionally accredited** college or university. All public community colleges and universities in North Carolina are regionally accredited.

What is a professional certification level?

A certification level is a numbered step on a 10-step Early Educator Scale that reflects the amount of education you have earned in the field of early childhood education, child development or related/ supporting fields of study.



How do I qualify for certification?

To obtain your certification level you must return your application and official college transcripts for ALL courses taken and/or degrees earned to the North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development. Credit for professional work experience is not used to determine your certification level.