

# Vermont Early Childhood Career Ladder

## Level I

LEVEL I   LEVEL II   LEVEL III   LEVEL IV   LEVEL V   LEVEL VI

### What is the Career Ladder?

The Career Ladder identifies the six career levels of professional development in the field of early childhood care and education. It serves as a basis for tracking and planning your professional growth. You may enter the Career Ladder at any level, and there are many different paths to take to develop your career. Each level combines education and experience. The Northern Lights core competencies provide the foundation for this system.

### Who should begin at Level I?

Individuals who are beginning to work in the field of early childhood, or people who have taken child development courses in high school or a regional technical center, or those who have worked in the early childhood field for a long time but have not applied for any Level certificate.

### How do I achieve a Level I certificate?

Submit a completed Level I application to Northern Lights. Include documentation of: 1) at least one year experience working with young children in a group; 2) a current Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP); 3) documentation of successful completion of any one of these three education options:

- *Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals* course, OR
- Three related college credits in (early) child development *plus* two workshops: Basic Specialized Care, and Introduction to Child Care Licensing and one approved observation of you working with children OR
- 45 hours of verified training and a Northern Lights approved portfolio.

### Why is completing Level I important?

When you achieve a Level I certificate you gain valuable training. In addition, you are recognized for your accomplishment and commitment. You may also be eligible for a Recognition Bonus from the Child Development Division. Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) also recognizes Level certificates. For staff new to the field, Vermont Early Childhood Program Licensing Regulations require successful completion of Level I within one year of employment.



*"The Fundamentals Course really helped me grow as a child care provider."*

### Resources:

Northern Lights Career Development Center  
<http://northernlightscdc.org>

- see *Career Ladder* and find the Level applications
- see *Resources* to find your local Resource Development Specialist who offers *Fundamentals*
- see *Curricula I* for details on the Fundamentals course and Portfolio review option
- see *Core Competencies*

Community College of Vermont  
<http://www.ccv.edu/>

Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS)  
<http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/stars>  
see *Arena: staff qualifications and annual professional development*

**Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center**  
**<http://northernlightscdc.org>**  
**Phone: (802)828-2876**

*See the reverse side for more information on Level I*

# Vermont Early Childhood Career Ladder Level I (continued)

## Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals

This 45-hour course helps you achieve Level I. It is based on the Level I core competencies for early childhood professionals and covers the following topics:

- Observation of children
- Health and safety
- Planning learning environments
- Professionalism and program organization
- Child development: infants to preschoolers
- Connecting to families and communities
- Child care regulations & Basic Specialized Care
- Including children with diverse needs

This course gives you a chance to reflect on your work with children, to apply what you learn in class to the children you care for, and meet and learn from other professionals.

### Where is the course offered and how much is it?

The *Fundamentals* course is offered annually in each region of Vermont by the community child care support agencies. Course fees vary by region. The courses are listed in the Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) Course Calendar.

### What is the Northern Lights approved portfolio?

One way to complete the education requirement for Level I is to create a portfolio with 1) documentation that you have completed 45 hours of training across the five core knowledge areas (including Basic Specialized Care and Introduction to Child Care Regulations); 2) documents that show what you know and how you use the Level I core competencies; and 3) documentation of when you were observed teaching. The portfolio is then reviewed and approved. This option is useful if you have not taken college courses, have collected many hours of training over the years and like to write and organize your learning. You must contact Northern Lights before you plan to apply.

### What is the required Observation?

No matter which option you use to complete the education requirement for Level I, you will need to be observed by an experienced mentor while you are working with children. Your local Resource Development Specialist can help you find the person to do this observation. The observer gives you supportive feedback about what she sees.

<http://northernlightscdc.org>

Phone: (802)828-2876



### Did you know...?

The *Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals* -

- can be the first step to a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA).
- includes the training to become a Basic Specialized Care provider.
- helps you learn how to create your Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP).

### More Resources:

CDA credential information  
<http://.cdacouncil.org/>

BFIS Course Calendar  
<http://brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us/>



Northern Lights Career  
Development Center  
660 Elm St, PO Box 489  
Montpelier, VT 05601