

Vermont Career Advising Guide for Early Childhood and Afterschool Professionals



***Vermont Northern Lights
Career Development Center***

Of the Community College of Vermont and the Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council.
Funded by the Child Development Division, Vermont Agency of Human Services.



*I looked for a job with children
because I like kids and people said I was good with them.
I've been working with kids for a few years now and have taken a
lot of classes. I know a lot more than when I started. Mostly I've enjoyed this
work. It's interesting, even if it's not always easy. I'm starting to feel pretty confident
about what to do and how to do it, but there are still some challenging days. It's time
to update my IPDP again, which has me thinking about my direction for the
future. At first this was just a job, an income, for me. Now I'm wondering
what it would mean to make early childhood a real career.*

Working with children is inspiring, challenging and rewarding. We recognize the importance of this work and see what a difference it can make to individual children, to families and to you as an employee. We also recognize it is more than a job. It can be a career.

When you choose early childhood or afterschool care and education as a profession, then you are a professional.

A professional:

- is a member of a vocation founded upon specialized knowledge and skills
- is associated with specialized training related to that profession
- follows established standards of practice
- is responsible for following a code of ethical conduct

Goble, C.E., & Horn, D.M. 2010. *Take charge of your personal and professional development*. Young Children 65 (6): 87.

Where am I as a professional?

Where can I go next in my career?

How do I get there?

This booklet is about you. Discover the many options and resources available to you as you grow in your work with children, and in your role as a professional.

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College Course Work Alignment: Early Childhood and Afterschool Career Pathways
Early Childhood Career Ladder and alignment with the Professional Recognition Bonus

October 2011

Northern Lights Career Development Center

The entire document can be downloaded at no cost from the Northern Lights Career Development Center website: www.northernlightscdc.org - check this website for the most current information. This work is generously supported by the Child Development Division, Department of Children and Families, Vermont Agency of Human Services and United Children's Services of Bennington County (Head Start Bennington County).

Introduction

What is the Career Advising Guide?

The Career Advising Guide is a handbook that describes resources and options to help individuals reach each of the steps along the early childhood and afterschool career pathways in Vermont.

Who is the Career Advising Guide for?

It is for a wide range of people who have an interest in children's growth and well-being and the quality of care children receive. It's for people who work with children and those who are just considering it; for those that have years of experience, and those that have none. It covers many positions and work settings.

Positions, such as:

- Child care providers, teachers, youth workers
- Paraprofessionals and teaching assistants
- Home visitors and therapists
- Directors, managers and administrators
- Consultants and advisors
- Mentors and coaches
- Licensors
- Resource and referral specialists
- Instructors and faculty
- Advocates and policy makers

Work settings, such as:

- Afterschool or before school programs
- Family child care, licensed child care programs, and regulated care
- Head Start and Boys & Girls Clubs
- Public and private schools

Why do we need a Career Advising Guide?

Children deserve the very best we can provide for them. They deserve to be in the best possible environments, surrounded by opportunities and materials that support their optimal development. Most important, they need to be in relationships with caring, responsive and knowledgeable adults. The quality of children's experiences depends largely on the perspective, experience, skills and behavior of the people who work with them. Clear, accessible and rewarding career

pathways support quality because they acknowledge and help develop the professional abilities of those important adults in children's lives.

The similarities and differences between early childhood and afterschool programs and career pathways are reflected in this Guide. At times the pathways weave together and at other times they're parallel.

In Vermont, there are a variety of options for career development along the early childhood and afterschool pathways. These pathways overlap and have significant similarities, as well as differences. For example, most afterschool employees work part time, and most early childhood program staff work full time. There are many different degrees and credentials that can prepare you to work in an afterschool setting; Early childhood has specific degrees and credentials required to work with young children. Afterschool as a profession is relatively new compared to the field of early childhood.

However, both options recognize that professionals may start at any point along the career pathway – not just at the beginning. Both embrace professionals who have always worked in the field, as well as those who change careers to join the field. Both fields include related specialists such as artists, therapists, or naturalists.

Both early childhood and afterschool fields promote staff quality across five knowledge areas:

1. Child and youth development
2. Teaching and learning/curriculum and learning environments
3. Family and community partnerships
4. Professionalism and program organization
5. Safe and healthy environments

The core competencies for early childhood and afterschool professionals detail these five areas.

The early childhood and afterschool fields are evolving in exciting ways. There are many opportunities to make a difference for children and their families and for the future of the profession. Groups across the state are discussing and taking action on important issues including wages, program and teacher quality, integrating services for families, educating the public about the importance of child development, and many other issues.

How can you use the Career Advising Guide?

There are many different ways:

- Review it to expand your knowledge about the early childhood and afterschool fields in Vermont
- Find yourself in the Guide, and reflect on your next steps
- Share it with colleagues to learn more about who you are as professionals, and how to help each other
- Share it with your mentor, consultant or supervisor
- Use it when you are mentoring or consulting professionals
- Use it as a text in a class or workshop you are teaching

I refer to the Career Advising Guide when I meet with early childhood education students. They are excited to learn that completing coursework related to the Core Knowledge Areas will count towards a Level certificate while they are still in the process of earning their degree.



Professional development activities are “interactive developmental activities... [that] include but are not limited to workshop training sessions, course work, site visits to other programs, mentoring sessions, lectures, presentations, or acting as a member of an assessment team for compliance to regulations.”

~ 2001 CDD child care licensing regulations

Professional Competencies

It's up to you.

What are Competencies?

Competencies are the foundation of our early childhood and afterschool professional development system. Competencies refer to the observable, concrete skills and knowledge that define the development and delivery of high quality services and programs. They establish standards of practice that strengthen the early childhood and afterschool fields. Competencies are relevant to any position: teacher, assistant, coordinator, volunteer, provider, home-visitor, paraprofessional, and more. They are also relevant for any setting where early childhood and afterschool services take place: child care centers, schools, community-based organizations, homes, recreation centers, etc.

Vermont has defined 5 *core* competencies. They support high quality programming and services and are grouped by the following knowledge areas:

- Child and Youth Development
- Families and Communities
- Curriculum/ Teaching and Learning
- Healthy and Safe Environments
- Professionalism and Program Organization

Why do we have them?

When early childhood and afterschool professionals have and use well-defined competencies, it means there is agreement about the expectations of the professionals working with children and families.

The core competencies are used in many different ways: to assess individual learning needs, to develop education and training curriculum, to support supervision and mentoring, to develop job descriptions and performance evaluations, and to create individual professional development plans (IPDPs).

Where can I find them?

You can view and download all the competency documents on the Northern Lights Career Development Center website (see Resources). Hard copies are also available through your local child care resource and referral agencies. The Vermont competency documents are:

[Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals](#) defines the standards for professionals working with young children from birth to age 6.

[Core Competencies for Afterschool Professionals](#) defines the standards for individuals working with children and youth, ages 5-18, during their out-of-school time.

[Competencies for Program Directors](#) working in early childhood or afterschool programs, based on the same core knowledge areas as the two competency documents above. This document specifically details what program directors need to know and do.

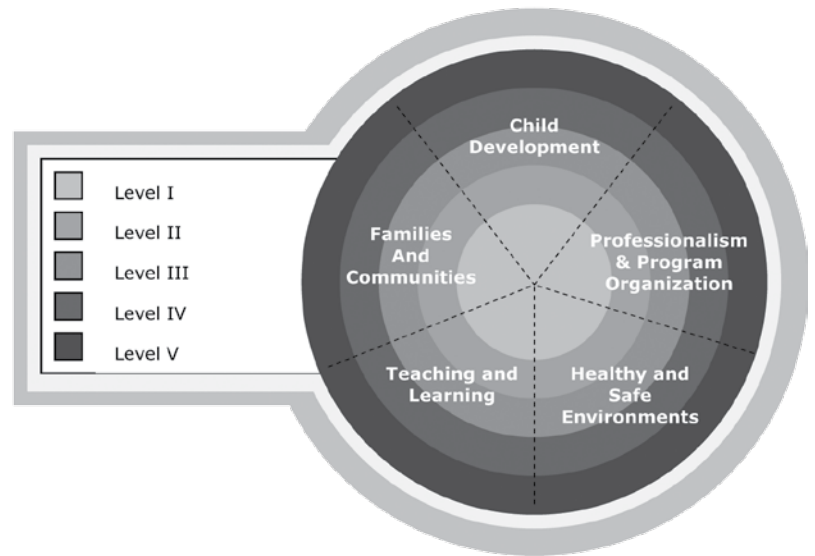
[Early Childhood Family Mental Health Competencies](#) detail what professionals with specialty knowledge in working with children ages birth to 8, and their families, need to know and do to support the social and emotional development of the child. These have six knowledge areas and four levels. They overlap but are not the same as the five knowledge areas cited above.

How are they organized?

Competencies are organized by levels. Early childhood competencies have six levels. Afterschool competencies have three phases. They both form a pathway that can be used to plan and guide your career growth.

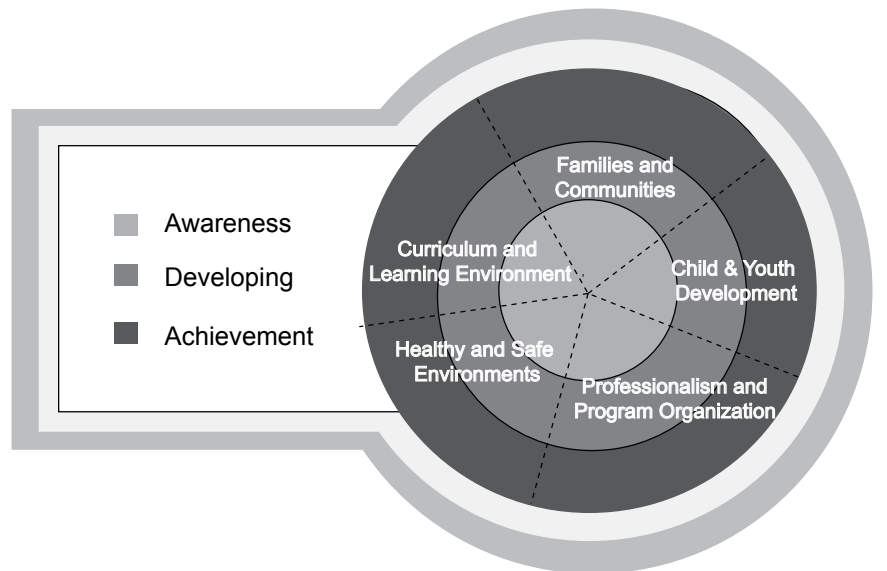
Early Childhood Career Ladder

Your knowledge and skills increase as you acquire the core competencies that are embedded into each level of the career ladder. Each level on the ladder includes a combination of education and experience. To apply for a Level certificate, you will need to have a current IPDP.



Afterschool Career Pathways

The core competencies for afterschool professionals are the foundation for afterschool career planning and professional development. There are a wide range of roles and settings in the afterschool field and the career pathways encompass them all.



I have been a family child care provider longer than I can remember. I started taking the Fundamentals course because I was encouraged to, but I wasn't planning on finishing it. Now that I have completed the course I can say I learned more than I ever thought I would. I was surprised that I have a lot in common with the people working in centers. Now I can get my level I certificate. I am thinking about getting my CDA and I really feel like a professional!

Career Levels and Pathways

In this section, the six early childhood career levels, and the three phases of the afterschool career path are described in detail.

The Early Childhood Career Ladder and the Afterschool Pathways help you to plan and track your professional growth. As the person who cares for and teaches children, your skills, knowledge and behavior has a critical impact on each child's development and learning. Clear, accessible and rewarding career pathways support quality because they acknowledge and foster the development of those important adults in children's lives.

Each step on the early childhood and afterschool career pathways is based on the core competencies and standards - what professionals need to know, understand, and do at different stages in their professional development. Each step builds on the earlier step, so that when you complete one step, you have already met some of the requirements for the next step.

To achieve a level or step along the pathway, individuals:

- Complete education
- Gain experience working with children and families
- Reflect on their accomplishments and future professional development plans in a current Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

Some options along the pathway also require you to complete a portfolio documenting your knowledge and skills.

On the Early Childhood Career Ladder, you can apply for a certificate from the Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center when you complete each level. You don't have to start at Level I. Apply for the level that best matches your professional experience and achievements- step I, II, III or higher. The applications and other information are on the interactive Career Ladder on the Northern Lights website.

Along the Afterschool Career Pathways, achievements are primarily recognized by credentials and certificates. The applications and other information about the Afterschool Pathways are also on the Northern Lights website.

In Vermont, completion of early childhood career levels, afterschool certificates and credentials are:

- Recognized by the Child Development Division to achieve a recognition bonus
- Aligned with the STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) program quality and improvement system
- Integrated with child care licensing regulations and Vermont Department of Education educator license and endorsements
- Aligned with many college courses and some other certificates and credentials

Professional Development is a continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with and on behalf of young children, older children, youth and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. These opportunities lead to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of the professionals. Professional development encompasses *education, training, and technical assistance*.

~ Adapted from NAEYC NACCRRA Glossary 2011

Early Childhood Career Ladder

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV	Level V	Level VI
<p>1. <u>Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals</u> course (45 hours)</p> <p>or</p> <p>2. NL approved Level I <u>Portfolio</u> with documentation, 45 hours of verified professional development and one approved observation of the practitioner⁴</p> <p>or</p> <p>3. NL approved <u>3 related college credits</u>¹ in child development including early childhood + basic specialized care, introduction to licensing and one approved observation⁴</p>	<p>1. <u>Current Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential</u></p> <p>or</p> <p>2. NL approved Level II <u>Portfolio</u> with documentaiton, 125 hours of verified professional development and two approved observations of the practitioner⁴</p> <p>or</p> <p>3. NL approved <u>12 related college credits</u>¹ in at least 2 VT Core Knowledge areas³ and two approved observations of the practitioner⁴</p>	<p>A) 1. <u>Completed Vermont Child Care Registered Apprentice</u></p> <p>or</p> <p>2. <u>CCV's Child Care Certificate program</u></p> <p>or</p> <p>3. <u>Highly Qualified Paraprofessional</u>⁵</p> <p>or</p> <p>4. NL approved equivalent: <u>21 related college credits</u>¹ in at least 3 of the VT Core Knowledge areas³ and two approved observations of the practitioner⁴</p> <p>B) <u>Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education</u> or related field¹</p> <p>or</p> <p>Associate's degree with 21 related college credits¹ in at least 3 VT Core Knowledge areas³</p>	<p>A) 1. <u>Bachelor Degree in Early Childhood Education</u> or related field¹</p> <p>or</p> <p>2. Bachelor's degree with NL approved <u>30 related college credits</u>¹ within at least 3 of the VT Core Knowledge Areas³</p> <p>B) Above with <u>VT Department of Education teaching license</u> with endorsement in early childhood, early childhood special education or elementary education</p>	<p>A) <u>Master Degree in Early Childhood Education</u> or related field¹</p>	<p><u>Doctoral Degree in Early Childhood Education</u> or related field¹</p>
<p>Experience²: One year</p>	2 years or more	2 years or more	2 years or more including student teaching		2 years or more

Applications: Those awarded Level Certificates may also be eligible for a Recognition Bonus from the Child Development Division.

¹*Related fields/credits: All credits and degrees must be from an accredited, Northern Lights approved Institution of Higher Education.*

When a degree is required (Level IIIB, IV, V) then Related Fields refer to degrees with a major or concentration in one of the following areas:

- *Early Childhood*
- *Child or Human Development*
- *Education (early childhood or elementary or special education)*
- *Child and Family Studies (including Home Economics)*

Related Credits: When the individual's field of study is not one of the four areas above, or when college credits are an option to reach the Level, then credit-bearing coursework in one or more of the following areas will be accepted.

- *Child or human development*
- *Education, including special education*
- *Health, including nutrition and nursing*
- *Psychology/mental health/ child and family studies*
- *Sociology/human services/ social sciences/social services*
- *Business /administration (related to instruction on early childhood or afterschool program management)*

²*Experience as an early childhood professional (not necessarily cumulative). Experience at Level I may be in any setting with groups of children who are not family members, at level II-VI must be in regulated child care setting.*

³*VT Core Knowledge areas include: Families and Communities, Child Development, Healthy and Safe Environments, Teaching and Learning, Professionalism and Program Organization*

⁴*Approved Observation of the Practitioner as approved and arranged between the regional Resource Development Specialist and Northern Lights Career Development Center*

⁵*Highly Qualified Paraprofessional is a national designation given by a public school to paraprofessionals who meet defined criteria under No Child Left Behind.*

The Vermont Early

The Career Lattice is a frame of reference to help you consider how levels on the Career Ladder generally connect to different

SETTINGS	LEVEL I	LEVEL II	LEVEL III
Home Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered Family Child Care Provider Family Child Care Assistant Legally Exempt Child Care Provider Instructor Registry-Affiliate I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed Family Child Care Home Registered Family Child Care Provider Legally Exempt Child Care Provider MATCH Network Instructor Registry-Affiliate I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed Family Child Care Home Registered Family Child Care Provider Legally Exempt Child Care Provider MATCH Network Instructor Registry-Affiliate II
Licensed Early Childhood Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Associate Director (59 or fewer children) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Associate Director (59 or fewer children)
Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Para-educator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly Qualified Para-professional
Parent Child Center/ Family Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Childhood Special Education Aide
Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer Classroom Aide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Assistant Home Visitor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Home Visitor Family Services Worker
Early Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Home Visitor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Home Visitor Family Services Worker
Community Child Care Support Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USDA Food Program Specialist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USDA Food Program Specialist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Director
State Offices		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensing Technician 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensing Field Specialist
Other Common Settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playgroup Facilitator 		

Childhood Career Lattice

work settings. This is not a complete description. Please check actual job requirements for specific information.

LEVEL IV	LEVEL V	LEVEL VI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed Family Child Care Home Registered Family Child Care Provider Legally Exempt Child Care Provider MATCH Network Instructor Registry-Certified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed Family Child Care Home Registered Family Child Care Provider MATCH Network Instructor Registry-Master 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed Family Child Care Home Registered Family Child Care Provider MATCH Network Instructor Registry-Master
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director PreK Teacher Early Childhood Special Educator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director PreK Teacher Early Childhood Special Educator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director PreK Teacher Early Childhood Special Educator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Early Childhood Special Educator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal Special Services Coordinator Early Childhood Special Educator 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Coordinator Outreach Worker Parent Educator Teacher Associate Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director Early Childhood Special Educator 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Director Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Collaboration Coordinators 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Director Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Collaboration Coordinators 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Director Program Director Resource Development Specialist Referral Specialist CIS Child Care Coordinator CCFAP Eligibility Specialist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Director 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensing Supervisor USDA Food Program Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State (CDD and DOE) employee, administrator, or consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State (CDD and DOE) administrator or consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Health Nurse Early Interventionist BBF Regional Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College adjunct faculty Early Intervention related services Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty at colleges and universities

Career Pathways for Phases & Related Professional

Afterschool professionals work mostly part-time within many contexts and program settings. Their job titles vary greatly according to their individual contexts. As a result, there is not a “typical” afterschool professional. Employment opportunities include home and community-

based child care settings, schools, youth centers, recreation programs, and 21st Century community learning centers, to name a few possibilities. Even though afterschool settings are diverse, there are three career tracts common to the field: (1) child care, (2) youth work, and (3) education. These

Awareness Phase	Developing Phase
Focuses on building entry-level, basic skills and knowledge.	Extends basic skills and knowledge into practice and may include accumulation of college credits and specialty certification.
Required Experience: Within the first two years of working as an afterschool professional.	Required Experience: Three years or more of working with school-age children; a minimum of 500 hours of direct work in a program.
Professional Development Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vermont Afterschool Foundations Certificate • Afterschool Essentials • On-the-Job Training Certificate* • Highly Qualified Paraprofessional Certificate • VT Program Director Credential, Step One 	Professional Development Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-the-Job Training Certificate * • Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential (VAPC)* • Highly Qualified Paraprofessional Certificate • VT Program Director Credential, Step One, Two • Teacher Licensure
Related Education: High school diploma/GED, college and vocational/technical students, associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s degree	Related Education: College students, associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s degree

*Bonuses are available when additional requirements are completed.

Afterschool Career Pathways:

Vermont’s afterschool professionals can support their work by pursuing the opportunities that are available

Glimpse 1: An Afterschool Professional

Evelyn started working as an aide in a licensed summer program for school age children. She then moved into a year-round, part-time position with a center-based afterschool program in her community. During her first year there, she received the Afterschool Foundations Certificate and was moved into a Group Leader position. She then enrolled in the college-level courses required for the Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential and continued to consolidate her training and workshop hours into a portfolio, as required for the Afterschool Credential and Step one of the Program Director Credential. Evelyn’s long-term goal is to be a Site Director and to finish the coursework required for all steps of the Program Director Credential.

Glimpse 2: A Child Care Provider

Karen owns and operates a licensed family child care home. She has a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential and completed Step one of the Vermont Program Director Credential. The age-range of the children in Karen’s care has changed from serving 2 to 4 year olds to 3 to 9 year olds. Karen wanted to build on her early education background and gain knowledge in school-age development. She contacted her local Resource Development Specialist, who recommended several trainings, including an online course, Introduction to Afterschool Education and Care. Karen successfully completed the course and applied for the Vermont Afterschool Foundations Certificate. She is now working towards the Afterschool Professional Development Credential as well as completing Step two of the Program Director Credential.

Afterschool Professionals: Development Opportunities

tracts as linked to the three phases of learning - awareness, developing, achievement. The information below provides a general career development framework for prospective and current afterschool professionals. The pathways grid

and supporting scenarios illustrate how professionals working within these career tracts might connect to the afterschool professional development opportunities.

Achievement Phase	
	Explores leadership, community, and administration.
	Required Experience: A minimum of three years working in the field as a program director or other leadership capacity.
	Professional Development Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential (VAPC)* • Vermont Program Director Credential, Step Three* • Highly Qualified Paraprofessional Certificate • Teacher Licensure Other related opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor, Northern Lights Instructor Registry • Mentors for Quality • Coaching: Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence
	Related Education: Associate's, bachelor's, master's degree

Glimpses from the Field

to them along their Career Pathways. Here are four professional development scenarios to consider:

Glimpse 3: A Youth Work Professional

David began as a volunteer tutor with an afterschool program after finishing high school. He went on to earn a Bachelor Degree in Physical Education while interning at a mental health center. After earning his B.A. he was hired as a Behavioral Health Specialist at the center, where he specializes in designing and running programs for youth ages 12 to 18 years old. He is currently completing the requirements for the Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential. His long term goal is to seek a Master Degree in Counseling Psychology and gain further experience as a Youth Case Manager and Mental Health Counselor with a continued focus on physical education.

Glimpse 4: An Educator

Sylvia has an associate's degree and is designated a highly qualified paraprofessional in her public school. For the past two and a half years, she has tutored math in several afterschool programs where she works primarily with fourth and fifth graders. Now she's pursuing her B.A. and simultaneously applying her college credits to meet the requirements for the Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential. She wants to enhance her career by formally recognizing her skills, experience, and familiarity with the afterschool setting. Her long-term goal is to become a licensed math teacher.

*By receiving the VAPC,
I'm one step closer to my goal as a
supervisor and I helped my program
earn STARS.*



*It took a lot of work to
get my CDA, but my mentor helped a
lot and so did the other folks who had gotten one.
Now I can be in charge of my own classroom at the
center, I have a national credential, I applied for
a Level II certificate and I think I'll get a
Recognition Bonus too.*

Early Childhood Career Pathways: For individuals working with children ages birth to six in group settings

Individuals who work in the early childhood field, may work:

- Directly with children infancy to age six in groups or individually
- Work with families
- Work with other professionals

They work in a range of settings including family child care, licensed early childhood centers, children's homes, and other settings. Early childhood practitioners also work for a variety of employers such as:

- Head Start
- Parent Child Center or Family Center
- Private for-profit or not-for-profit early childhood program
- Public school system or private school
- Community agency or organization
- Are self- employed, or in another type of setting

Early childhood practitioners use professional *standards and competencies* to define what they should know and do. These are the basis for the early childhood career

levels.

- Level I, II, III: Early Childhood Core Competencies
- Level IV, V: Vermont Department of Education professional standards

Early childhood practitioners also use the Early Childhood Career Ladder, which is based on the competencies, standards and levels above. This pathway defines how to achieve each level, with multiple options to achieve each one. There are also classes and courses available statewide, which meet the education requirements for each level along the Career Ladder.

Some early childhood practitioners seek additional professional development and recognition by:

- Applying to the Vermont Instructor Registry and increasing their knowledge and skills instructing adults
- Seeking a Program Director Credential, Early Childhood Family Mental Health Credential or other specialty endorsement

Early childhood practitioners who work primarily with other professionals rather than children, such as program directors, instructors, advisors, consultants or managers, also need to be knowledgeable about these resources.

Last year I took a college course in child development that included birth to three years, because I was thinking about getting a degree some day. Now I realize when I complete the other requirements, I can send my transcript with my IPDP and application to Northern Lights and get my Level I certificate. This will help my program with our STARS application, and I will have a certificate to show my friends and family, and maybe get a Recognition Bonus from the Child Development Division, too!

Early Childhood Career Ladder: Level I

Level I is based on the Level I Early Childhood core competencies. The application for Level I is on the Northern Lights Career Development Center website.

You may decide to seek a Level I certificate if you:

- Are beginning to work in the field of early childhood, or considering it
- Have taken child development courses in high school or a regional technical center
- Have worked in the early childhood field for a long time but have not applied for any level certificate

Level I in the Early Childhood Career Ladder (like the other levels), requires:

- Completed education or training
- Experience working with young children
- A current Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

It also requires the applicant to:

- Observe children and reflect on what is seen
- Be observed while working with young children, and reflect with the observer on that experience

VT Early Childhood Career Lattice	
SETTINGS	LEVEL I
Home Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Family Child Care Provider • Family Child Care Assistant • Legally Exempt Child Care Provider • Instructor Registry-Affiliate I
Licensed Early Childhood Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Assistant
Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer
Parent Child Center/ Family Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer
Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer • Classroom aide
Early Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer
Community Child Care Support Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA Food Program Specialist
State Offices	
Other Settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playgroup Facilitator

VT Career Ladder Alignment Chart	
	Level I
Years experience needed to achieve level certificate	1 year experience
Professional Recognition Bonus from the VT Child Development Division	\$100
STARS- staff qualifications arena ¹	Score 1

¹ This refers to "Educational Attainment" score, which is one of three parts in the Teaching Staff Qualifications and Annual Professional Development Arena; total score of all staff are converted to a single program STARS points for this arena

When you complete your Level I requirements, submit your documentation, your completed IPDP and a Level I application to Northern Lights Career Development Center. Successful applicants receive a certificate and pin. If your application also meets the basic screening requirements as described in the application, then it will also be forwarded to the Child Development Division to consider for a Professional Recognition Bonus.

LEVEL I	LEVEL II	LEVEL III	LEVEL IV	LEVEL V	LEVEL VI
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There are three *education options* to reach a Level I certificate: Choose ONE.

Option 1: Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals

This is a 45-hour course based on the Level I Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals. It includes the requirements to achieve Level I certification. It is offered annually in each region of Vermont by the community child care support agencies. Course fees vary by region. It 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.

Option 2: Northern Lights *approved portfolio*

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. The portfolio includes:

- Documentation that you have completed 45 hours of

training across the five core knowledge areas with at least 5 hours in each area

- Documents that show what you know and how you use the Level I core competencies
- Documentation of when you were observed teaching

The portfolio is then reviewed for approval.

Option 3. Complete an early childhood development college course (3 credits)

In addition to the course you are also required to:

- Complete Basic Specialized Care (6 hours)
- Complete Introduction to Child Care Licensing regulations workshop

- Be observed while working with children and reflect on your experience

Benefits of Achieving a Level I Certificate

- You feel pride in your accomplishment and post your certificate for families and other staff to see; your name will be listed in the Northern Lights newsletter
- You may also be granted a Professional Recognition Bonus from the Child Development Division, gain points in the STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) program quality and improvement system: professional development arena, and meet licensing requirements for a teaching assistant
- You have completed 45 hours toward meeting the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) training requirements and are ready to take the next steps toward that credential.
- You have completed the training required to be considered as a Basic Specialized Care provider
- When you are enrolled in a college degree program at the Community College of Vermont, you can use Course Challenge to apply for three college credits for completing Fundamentals

Resources for Level I Applicants

- Northern Lights website – interactive Career Ladder includes detailed information, the Level I application, and guidance to develop your Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)
- Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) statewide course calendar to find the Fundamentals Course nearest you
- Local Resource Development Specialist offers the Fundamentals course, and can help you find approved observers
- Community College of Vermont (CCV) offers Child Development Courses. Course Challenge is also an option for enrolled students in a degree or certificate program
- Council for Professional Recognition – they award the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)

Early Childhood Career Ladder: Level II

Level II is based on the Level II Early Childhood Core Competencies. The application for Level II is on the Northern Lights Career Development Center website.

You may decide to seek a Level II certificate if you:

- Have experience working in the field of early childhood, and are committed to staying in the field for a while
- Have worked in the early childhood field for a long time, want to be recognized and are able to organize and document your knowledge and skills
- Have taken at least four college courses related to the field of early childhood, or completed the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, or 125 hours of professional development
- Have completed Early Childhood Level I requirements and are ready to move on

Level II in the Early Childhood Career Ladder (like the other levels) requires:

- Completed education or training
- Experience working with young children
- A current Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

It also requires the applicant to observe children and reflect on what is seen, and to be observed while working with young children, and reflect with the observer on that experience.

SETTINGS	LEVEL II
Home Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed Family Child Care Home • Registered Family Child Care Provider • Legally Exempt Child Care Provider • MATCH Network • Instructor Registry-Affiliate I
Licensed Early Childhood Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Associate • Director (59 or fewer children)
Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para-educator
Parent Child Center/Family Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Assistant
Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Assistant • Home Visitor
Early Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Home Visitor
Community Child Care Support Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA Food Program Specialist
State Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing Technician

VT Career Ladder Alignment Chart	
	Level II
Years experience needed to achieve level certificate	2 years experience
Professional Recognition Bonus from the VT Child Development Division	\$500 initial \$150 for first CDA renewal
STARS- staff qualifications arena ¹	Score 4

¹ This refers to "Educational Attainment" score, which is one of three parts in the Teaching Staff Qualifications and Annual Professional Development Arena; total score of all staff are converted to a single program STARS points for this arena

When you complete your Level II requirements, submit your documentation and your completed IPDP with a Level II application to the Northern Lights Career Development Center. Successful applicants receive a certificate and pin. If your application also meets the basic screening requirements as described in the application, it will also be forwarded to the Child Development Division to consider for a Professional Recognition Bonus.

LEVEL I	LEVEL II	LEVEL III	LEVEL IV	LEVEL V	LEVEL VI
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There are three *education options* to achieve a Level II certificate: Choose ONE

Option 1: Current Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential

This is a national credential that is awarded by the Council on Professional Recognition, based on achieving 13 functional competencies. The application components are:

- 120 hours of documented training hours covering eight subject areas (10 hours at least in each area)
- A resource file with specific information included
- Completed parent questionnaires about your work with their children

- A portfolio with your autobiography and examples of your knowledge and skills in the competency areas
- Recorded observation by an approved advisor, of your work with young children
- A completed application, payment of the application fee and written test and interview with the Council representative

The initial credential is for three years and it can be renewed every five years after that.

Option 2: Northern Lights approved Level II portfolio

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. The portfolio includes:

- Documentation that you have completed 120 hours of training across the five core knowledge areas

- Documents that show what you know and apply the level II core competencies, and
- Documentation of when you were observed teaching children

The portfolio is then reviewed and approved.

Option 3: Successfully complete four early childhood college courses (12 credits)

The four college courses must cover at least two of the five Core Knowledge areas (see the Core Competency section of this booklet). You are also required to be

observed while working with children and reflect on your experience.

Benefits of Achieving a Level II Certificate

- You feel pride in your accomplishment and supported as a professional; you can post your certificate for families and other staff to see; your name will be listed in the Northern Lights newsletter
- You may also be granted a Professional Recognition Bonus from the Child Development Division, gain points in STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) program quality and improvement system: professional development arena, and meet licensing requirements for a teaching associate in a licensed child care
- A Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) is recognized across the nation; the Child Development Division will pay your initial CDA application fee.
- The Child Development Division may issue a recognition bonus for the first renewal of a CDA.

Resources for Level II Applicants

- Northern Lights website – interactive Career Ladder includes detailed information, the application and guidance on to writing your Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)
- Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) state-wide course calendar to find the many different training modules offered nearest you
- Local Resource Development Specialist - they offer many of the training modules, can help connect you with a CDA mentor or advisor, and help you find approved observers for the other education options
- Community College of Vermont (CCV) - college courses related to the Early Childhood Core Knowledge areas
- Council for Professional Recognition – they award the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)
- Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC) - contracts with CCV to offer low cost college courses in the early childhood field, as part of the Child Care Apprenticeship Program

Early Childhood Career Ladder: Level III

Level III is based on the Level III Early Childhood Core Competencies and the requirements for an Associate Degree in Early Childhood at the Community College of Vermont. The application for Level III is on the Northern Lights Career Development Center website.

You may decide to seek a Level III certificate if you:

- Have experience working in the field of early childhood, and are committed to staying in the field for a while
- Have taken college coursework in early childhood
- Have completed early childhood level II requirements and are ready to move on, perhaps seeking an associate's or bachelor's degree

Level III in the Early Childhood Career Ladder requires:

- Completed college coursework
- Experience working with young children and
- A current Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

It also requires the applicant to observe children and reflect on what is seen, and to be observed while working with young children, and reflect with the observer on that experience.

SETTINGS	LEVEL III
Home Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed Family Child Care Home • Registered Family Child Care Provider • Legally Exempt Child Care Provider • MATCH Network • Instructor Registry-Affiliate II
Licensed Early Childhood Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Associate • Director (59 or fewer children)
Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly Qualified Para-professional
Parent Child Center/Family Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Special Education Aide
Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Home Visitor • Family Services Worker
Early Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Home Visitor • Family Services Worker
Community Child Care Support Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Director • USDA Food Program Specialist
State Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing Field Specialist

I had taken college courses a while ago, and after I started working in child care, I decided to continue my education and earn a degree in early childhood. I met with a college advisor and not only did some of my courses transfer to the college, but after taking a couple more courses, I can earn a Level IIIA certificate. Next I will earn a CCV child care certificate, and then on to my associate's degree! I'm going to apply for the scholarship from the Child Development Division too, to help me pay for the courses- and the certificates and diplomas I will hang on my wall!

There are two stages in the Level III Early Childhood Career Ladder: A and B

Level IIIA has *four education options*:

Level IIIB has *two education options*:

Option 1: Completed Vermont Child Care Registered Apprenticeship

Option 1: Associate’s degree in Early Childhood Education or related field

This program is offered in partnership with the Vermont Department of Labor and combines 4,000 hours of on-the-job training (working with a mentor for guidance, observation and assessment) with formal training which includes 6 specific tuition-free college courses (18 college credits).

Related fields include: other education (elementary or special education); child or human development or child and family studies.

Option 2: Community College of Vermont’s (CCV) Childcare Certificate Program

Option 2: Associate’s degree with related college credits

This 27 credit series of college courses are also a stepping stone to the CCV Associate Degree in Early Childhood.

Related college credits include: psychology, mental health, sociology, human services, social sciences, social services, or business administration (related to early childhood or afterschool program management) covering at least three Vermont Core Knowledge Areas (see IIIA).

Option 3: Designation as a Highly Qualified Paraprofessional from a public school

This is issued by the public school where the paraprofessional works. They determine how to meet the qualifications and award this certificate. The certificate is also recognized on the Afterschool Career Pathways.

Option 4: Twenty-one related college credits

Related college credits must be in at least three of the five Vermont Core Knowledge areas: Child Development, Teaching and Learning (curriculum), Healthy and Safe environments, Families and Communities, and Professionalism and Program Organization. The applicant also needs to be observed while working with children and reflect on the experience.

VT Career Ladder Alignment Chart		
	Level IIIA	Level IIIB
Years experience needed to achieve level certificate	2 years experience	2 years experience
Professional Recognition Bonus from the VT Child Development Division	\$750	\$1000
STARS- staff qualifications arena ¹	Score 9	Score 12

¹ This refers to “Educational Attainment” score, which is one of three parts in the Teaching Staff Qualifications and Annual Professional Development Arena; total score of all staff are converted to a single program STARS points for this arena

When you complete your Level III requirements, submit your documentation and your completed IPDP, with a Level III application to Northern Lights Career Development Center. Successful applicants receive a certificate and pin. If your application also meets the basic screening requirements as described in the application, then it will be forwarded to the Child Development Division to consider for a Professional Recognition Bonus.

Earning college credit

- You can earn college credit by taking a college course from an accredited institution. You will need to earn a C- or better and request a transcript issued by the college (either official or unofficial) to submit with your level certificate application
- If you already have a college degree in an unrelated field, you can still get a level certificate by completing college courses in a related field (21 credits or more). For level certificates, there is no time limit, so you may have earned some credit in your first degree that can still count toward your level certificate. You will need a transcript from the college, as documentation
- Other ways to earn college credit if you believe you already meet the learning objectives, include:
 - *The CLEP (College Level Examination Program)* test: accepted at practically all colleges in Vermont. Pass one exam to earn credit for one course (see Resources)
 - *Assessment of Prior Learning (APL)*: a way to earn many credits at once. If you have knowledge and skills based on in-depth and broad experiences you may document how you think you meet the learning objectives of college coursework and then request credit (see Resources)
 - *Course Challenge*: useful if you are already in a degree or certificate program at the Community College of Vermont, and you think you have already met the learning objectives of a course in your program (see Resources)

Benefits of Achieving a Level III Certificate

- You feel pride in your accomplishment and supported as a professional; you can post your certificate for families and other staff to see; you will be listed in the Northern Lights newsletter for your accomplishment
- You may also be granted a Professional Recognition Bonus from the Child Development Division (CDD), gain points in STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) program quality and improvement system, and meet licensing requirements for a teaching associate in a licensed child care (Applicants may receive a recognition bonus for both level IIIA and level IIIB if eligible.)
- The Child Development Division has scholarships to pay for college courses, for staff working in regulated child care
- The Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC) contracts with Community College of Vermont (CCV) to offer early childhood courses at low cost for those enrolled in the Child Care Apprenticeship Program, and to others as space allows
- An associate's degree is easily transferable to four-year colleges to help you earn a bachelor's degree

Completing the Apprenticeship program has given me the strength, drive, and confidence I needed to continue on with my education. Not only am I now working towards other degrees and certificates, but I have and am currently helping others work towards their goals, by becoming a mentor myself. Experiencing the process myself was uplifting, however witnessing and helping others as they endeavor this process is extremely rewarding.

Resources for Level III Applicants

- Northern Lights website: interactive Career Ladder includes detailed information and the application; also lists colleges in Vermont that offer course work in early childhood and details on the other options for earning college credit
- Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) statewide course calendar - find the upcoming courses that support the Child Care Apprenticeship program
- Local Resource Development Specialist - helps you find approved observers for the IIIA credit options and provides career advising
- Community College of Vermont (CCV) advisors - help you be sure the courses you are taking are going to build toward a future degree or certificate
- VT Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC) offers a continuum of professional development opportunities including participation in the Registered Child Care Apprenticeship Program and tuition-free college courses open to others as space allows



I had taken college courses a while ago, and after I started working in child care, I decided to continue my education and earn a degree in early childhood. I met with a college advisor and not only did some of my courses transfer to the college, but after taking a couple more courses, I can earn a Level IIIA certificate. Next I will earn a CCV child care certificate, and then on to my associate degree! I'm going to apply for the scholarship from the Child Development Division too, to help me pay for the courses- and the certificates and diplomas I will hang on my wall.

Early Childhood Career Ladder: Level IV

Level IV is based on the five Core Knowledge areas and the Vermont Department of Education (DOE) Professional Standards for licensed teachers with an Early Childhood endorsement. The application for Level IV is on the Northern Lights Career Development Center website.

You may decide to seek a Level IV certificate if you:

- Have experience working in the field of early childhood, and are committed to staying in the field
- Have completed college coursework in early childhood
- Have a bachelor’s degree in early childhood or a related field, or a Vermont DOE Educator License with an Early Childhood, Early Childhood Special Education or Elementary Education Endorsement
- Have a bachelor’s or master’s degree in a field unrelated to early childhood but want to be recognized on the Early Childhood Career Ladder
- Have completed Early Childhood Level III requirements and are ready to move on to complete your bachelor’s degree

Level IV in the Early Childhood Career Ladder requires:

- Completed college degree and specific coursework
- Experience working with young children
- A current Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

The course work required includes observation of children and observation of the student.

VT Career Ladder Alignment Chart	
	Level IV
Years experience needed to achieve level certificate	2 years experience
Professional Recognition Bonus from the VT Child Development Division	\$1200 plus + \$500 for DOE teacher licensure
STARS- staff qualifications arena ¹	Score 16 score 20 with DOE licensure

When you complete your Level IV requirements, submit your documentation and your completed IPDP with a Level IV application to Northern Lights Career Development Center. Successful applicants receive a certificate and pin. If your application also meets the basic screening requirements as described in the application, then it will be forwarded to the Child Development Division (CDD) to consider for a Professional Recognition Bonus for either Level A or B. CDD only gives a Bonus for initial educator license, for IVB certificate holders.

¹ This refers to “Educational Attainment” score, which is one of three parts in the Teaching Staff Qualifications and Annual Professional Development Arena; total score of all staff are converted to a single program STARS points for this arena

LEVEL I	LEVEL II	LEVEL III	LEVEL IV	LEVEL V	LEVEL VI
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SETTINGS	LEVEL IV
Home Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed Family Child Care Home Registered Family Child Care Provider Legally Exempt Child Care Provider MATCH Network Instructor Registry-Certified
Licensed Early Childhood Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director PreK Teacher Early Childhood Special Educator
Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Early Childhood Special Educator
Parent Child Center/Family Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Coordinator Outreach Worker Parent Educator Teacher Associate Director
Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Director Manager
Early Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Director Manager
Community Child Care Support Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Director Executive Director Program Director Resource Development Specialist Referral Specialist CIS Child Care Coordinator CCFAP Eligibility Specialist
State Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensing Field Specialist
Other Common Settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Health Nurse Early Interventionist BBF Regional Director

There are two parts in the Level IV Early Childhood Career Ladder, A and B. You may complete either or both (see side bar).

Level IVA includes *two education options*:

Option 1: Bachelor's degree in related field

Related fields are: early childhood, early childhood special education, elementary education, child or human development, and child & family studies

Option 2: Bachelor' degree in unrelated field with related credits

Bachelor's degree in an unrelated field, with 30 related college credits including: psychology, mental health, sociology, human services, social sciences, social services, or business administration (related to early childhood or afterschool program management) covering at least three Vermont Core Knowledge areas: Child Development, Teaching and Learning (curriculum), Healthy and Safe Environments, Families and Communities, and Professionalism and Program Organization

Level IVB

Bachelor's degree with Vermont Department of Education (DOE) educator license with an endorsement in Early Childhood, Early Childhood Special Education or Elementary Education

I was so proud to get my educator license through peer review, even though it was a ton of work. Now I have many more options for jobs, because many Early Childhood programs are partnering with the public schools and need to hire a teacher with a DOE license.

Earning a college degree, college credits and educator licensure (see Resources)

Your academic degree and other college courses must be from a college or university that is accredited by the federal Department of Education and CHEA (the college and university accrediting approval institution). Northern Lights website has information to help you check this on line. You will need to earn a C- or better for approval of any college courses.

- You should request a transcript issued by the college (either official or unofficial) to submit with your Level certificate application
- If you have an academic degree in an unrelated field, you can still get a Level IV certificate by taking additional courses in a related field. First, check to see if any of the courses in your degree program could count toward the 30 related credits required
- There is no time limit, so you may receive a Level certificate even if your degree or credits are from a long time ago. To receive a recognition bonus from the Child Development Division, your last credit or diploma must have been completed in the last two years
- Other ways to earn college credit if you believe you already meet the learning objectives of a course are:
 - *The CLEP (College Level Examination Program)* test: accepted at practically all colleges in Vermont. Pass one exam to earn credit for one course (see Resources)
 - *Assessment of Prior Learning (APL)*: a way

to earn many credits at once. If you have knowledge and skills based on in-depth and broad experiences you may document how you think you meet college coursework learning objectives and then request credit (see Resources)

- *Course Challenge*: useful if you are already in a degree or certificate program at the Community College of Vermont, and you think you have already met the learning objectives of a course in your program (see Resources)
- *Educator licensure*: awarded by the Vermont Department of Education (DOE) in three ways:
 1. You can apply for educator licensure after you have earned a liberal arts degree from a college or university that is approved for recommending teacher licensure, or
 2. If you have a license from another state, apply to Vermont DOE to have it accepted here, or
 3. Another option is to complete a peer review process. Document how your years of experience and education enable you to meet the DOE educator license professional standards. Then, submit your portfolio to the peer review committee at the Vermont DOE; they determine if you receive a license

I got my degree but then I ended up working in Early Childhood, which I really love. Now I want to have a Level certificate to show that this is the profession I belong in. I can count many of my human services and health courses I took for my degree, and I am taking curriculum courses to round out my education and complete the 30 related credits for the Level certificate. I really like taking on line classes because I can do it in my pajamas!

Benefits of Achieving a Level IV Certificate

- You feel pride in your accomplishment and recognized as a professional; you can post your certificate for families and other staff to see; you will be listed in the Northern Lights newsletter for your accomplishment
- You may also be granted a Professional Recognition Bonus from the Child Development Division, gain points in the SStep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) professional development arena, and meet licensing requirements for a head teacher or possibly a director in a licensed child care program
- An early childhood program with staff that have Vermont Department of Education (DOE) Educator Licensure with Early Childhood endorsement, can participate in early childhood school partnerships under Act 62. Programs in these partnerships can access public school funding to support children in their care
- The Child Development Division has scholarships to pay for college courses, for staff and consultants working in regulated childcare

Resources for Level IV Applicants

- Northern Lights website: interactive Career Ladder includes detailed information and the Level application; also lists Vermont colleges that offer course work in early childhood and details the options for earning college credit, degrees and educator licensure through the Department of Education
- Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) statewide course calendar (find select college courses)
- College and University websites, catalogues and advisors
- Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC)
- Vermont Department of Education website: information about educator licensure and peer review



Early Childhood Career Ladder: Level V & VI

Level V and VI are based on the five core knowledge areas and the Vermont Department of Education (DOE) Professional Standards for licensed teachers with an early childhood endorsement. The application for Level V and Level VI is on the Northern Lights Career Development Center website.

You may decide to seek a Level V or VI certificate if you:

- Have significant experience working in the field of early childhood, and are committed to staying in the field
- Have a master's or doctorate degree in early childhood or a related field, with or without a Vermont DOE educator license
- Have completed Early Childhood Level IV requirements and are ready to move on to complete your master's degree or higher

Level V and VI in the Early Childhood Career Ladder require:

- Completed college degree and specific coursework
- Experience working with young children
- A current Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

The coursework to complete the credential requires the applicant to observe children and reflect on what is seen, and to be observed while working with children.

SETTINGS	LEVEL V	LEVEL VI
Home Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed Family Child Care Home • Registered Family Child Care Provider • MATCH Network • Instructor Registry-Master 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed Family Child Care Home • Registered Family Child Care Provider • MATCH Network • Instructor Registry-Master
Licensed Early Childhood Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director • PreK Teacher • Early Childhood Special Educator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director • PreK Teacher • Early Childhood Special Educator
Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • Special Services Coordinator • Early Childhood Special Educator 	
Parent Child Center/ Family Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director • Early Childhood Special Educator • Teacher • Associate Director 	
Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Collaboration Coordinator 	
Early Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Collaboration Coordinator 	
Community Child Care Support Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Director 	
State Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State (CDD and DOE) employee, administrator or consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State (CDD and DOE) employee, administrator or consultant
Other Common Settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College adjunct faculty • Early Intervention related services • Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty at colleges and universities

Level V

There are two parts in the Level V Early Childhood Career Ladder, A and B. You may complete *either or both*.

- **Level VA:** Master Degree in Early Childhood, Early Childhood Special Education, Elementary Education, Child or Human Development, Child and Family Studies, or other field specific to early childhood such as administration
- **Level VB:** Master’s degree with Vermont Department of Education (DOE) Educator License with an endorsement in Early Childhood, Early Childhood Special Education or Elementary Education

Level VI

Level VI is a Doctorate in a field with content in early childhood development or programs.

Earning a college degree, college credits and educator licensure

Your academic degree and other college courses must be from a college or university that is accredited by the federal Department of Education and CHEA (the college and university accrediting approval institution). Northern Lights website has information to help you check this on line.

- You should request a transcript issued by the college (either official or unofficial) to submit with your Level certificate application.
- There is no time limit, so you may receive a Level certificate even if your degree or credits are from a long time ago. To receive a Recognition Bonus from the Child Development Division, your last credit or diploma must have been completed in the last two years
- Educator licensure is awarded by the Vermont Department of Education (DOE) in three ways (see Resources)
 - You can apply for educator licensure after you have earned a liberal arts degree from a college or university that is approved to recommend for teacher licensure, or
 - If you have a license from another state, apply to Vermont DOE to have it accepted here, or
 - Another option is to complete a peer review process. You document how your years of experience and education meet the DOE educator license professional standards. Then, you submit your portfolio to the peer review committee at the Vermont DOE, and they determine if you receive a license

VT Career Ladder Alignment Chart		
	Level V	Level VI
Years experience needed to achieve level certificate	2 years experience (can include student teaching)	2 years experience (can include student teaching)
Professional Recognition Bonus from the VT Child Development Division	\$1200 plus + \$500 for DOE teacher licensure	
STARS- staff qualifications arena ¹	score 25	score 25

¹ This refers to “Educational Attainment” score, which is one of three parts in the Teaching Staff Qualifications and Annual Professional Development Arena; total score of all staff are converted to a single program STARS points for this arena

When you complete your Level V or VI requirements, submit your documentation and your completed IPDP with your Level application to Northern Lights Career Development Center. Successful applicants receive a certificate and pin. If their application also meets the basic screening requirements as described in the application, then it will be forwarded to the Child Development Division to consider for a Professional Recognition Bonus for either level. The Recognition Bonus for VB is awarded for initial educator license only.

Benefits of Achieving a Level V or VI Certificate

- You feel pride in your accomplishment and recognized as a professional; you can post your certificate for families and other staff to see; you will be listed in the Northern Lights newsletter for your accomplishment
- You may also be granted a Professional Recognition Bonus from the Child Development Division, gain points in STARS professional development arena, and meet licensing requirements for a Master Teacher in a licensed child care program.
- An Early Childhood program with staff that have Vermont DOE educator licensure with Early Childhood endorsement, can participate in Early Childhood school partnerships under Act 62. Programs in these partnerships can access public school funding to support children in their care
- The Child Development Division has scholarships for staff and consultants working in regulated childcare, to pay for college courses

Resources for Level V or VI Applicants (See Resources)

- BFIS course calendar - find select college coursework
- College and University websites, catalogues and advisors
- Northern Lights website – interactive Career Ladder includes detailed information and the Level application; also lists Vermont colleges that offer course work in Early Childhood and details the options for earning college credit, degrees and educator licensure through the Department of Education
- Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC)
- Vermont Department of Education website - information about educator licensure and peer review
- Higher Education Collaborative- weekend master’s degree program through Lyndon State College, with DOE educator licensure in early childhood or early childhood special education

I finally achieved my dream of earning a Master Degree. Getting a Level certificate was icing on the cake. On top of people seeing my name in the Northern Lights newsletter, I got a Recognition Bonus from the Child Development Division.



Afterschool Pathways

Afterschool is a nationally recognized term for programs that supervise school-age children and youth between the ages of five and 18 years, outside of school hours. Afterschool programs are varied, and can include home child care providers, community-based centers, schools, youth centers, recreation programs, 21st Century community learning programs, and others.

Afterschool professionals are individuals working with school age children and youth in afterschool programs. In Vermont, the afterschool field is made-up of diverse professionals. They come into the field with many different professional and educational experiences, both formal and informal, so the professional development needs of the afterschool field vary.

Afterschool professional pathways and opportunities are flexible - some can be completed quickly and others over several years. It all depends on your circumstances, experiences, and professional goals.

The Vermont Core Competencies for Afterschool Professionals are the basis of the professional development system. They provide a framework for individual assessment and for the credentials. They link to professional development opportunities in the afterschool field in three overlapping phases.

The three phases: *Awareness, Developing and Achievement*, define an evolving process of learning related to working in the field and growing as a professional. They form pathways that provide individualized opportunities for training, reflection, professional growth, and recognition.

1) Awareness Phase: Individuals are usually in this phase during the first two years of employment in the field. This time period focuses on building essential entry-level skills and knowledge. Opportunities in this phase offer a formal start to afterschool professionals.

- Afterschool Essentials and the Vermont Afterschool Foundations Certificate
- On the Job Training Certificate
- Program Director: Step One Certificate
- Highly Qualified Paraprofessional

2) Developing Phase: This phase extends basic skills and knowledge of the profession. Professional development opportunities may include college credits, credentials or special status. Often professionals in this phase are beginning to develop leadership skills.

- On the Job Training Certificate
- Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential
- Highly Qualified Paraprofessional
- Program Director: Step Two Certificate
- Educator Licensure

3) Achievement Phase: Afterschool professionals in this phase are often in leadership roles. They are refining their skills in community relations and program administration. Often they are instructing adults, and coaching or mentoring colleagues and others.

- Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential
- Program Director: Step Three Credential
- Highly Qualified Paraprofessional
- Educator Licensure

Other related opportunities

- Instructor Registry
- Coaching: Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence
- Mentors for Quality

The following pages will help you determine which pathways are right for you.



Afterschool Professional Pathways

Awareness Phase

Developing Phase

Achievement Phase

Awareness Phase

Vermont Afterschool Foundations Certificate (VAFC)

The VAFC recognizes professionals within the first two years of their employment in the afterschool field. To be eligible, candidates must complete and document a total of 16 hours of training, from each core competency area as noted below:

Core Competency Area	Hours
Child & Youth Development	2 hours
Curriculum & Learning Environment	2 hours
Families & Communities	2 hours
Healthy & Safe Environments	4 hours
Professionalism & Program Organization	2 hours
Electives	4 hours
Total Hours	16 hours

The Vermont Afterschool Foundations Certificate application is on the Northern Lights website. The Afterschool Essentials curricula prepare individuals to achieve the Afterschool Foundations Certificate.

Afterschool Essentials

This course is designed to meet the needs of the new professional with little experience in the afterschool setting. The course includes 29 hours of relevant workshops covering the Core Competencies for Afterschool Professionals, plus 10 hours of workshops in a concentration area of choice. Learning is then documented through a portfolio.

The course meets the requirements for staff training as outlined in the Afterschool Licensing Regulations. Those who complete the course will also receive a Vermont Afterschool Foundations Certificate (VAFC). Information is on the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence website and the Northern Lights Website (see Resources).

On-the-Job Training (OJT) Certificate

This certificate is earned through a specialized program available through the Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC) and the Vermont Department of Labor. OJT allows afterschool professionals in regulated settings to combine their work and learning experiences. Participants in OJT:

- Accumulate and document 1,000 hours of work experience
- Have a current CPR & First Aid card
- Document 45 hours of community-based and/or college level training related to the Afterschool Core Competencies.

It typically takes one to three years to complete the program, depending on the individual. Participants receive financial incentives along the way. For more information, contact VCCICC (see Resources).

Vermont Program Director Credential for Afterschool and Early Education Professionals: Step One Certificate

This credential process has three steps, requiring college coursework and a portfolio to achieve the credential. A certificate is issued for completion of the first two steps. The Step One Certificate requires nine college credits in the following topic areas:

College Coursework Focus	Credits
Child and Youth Development	3 credits
Curriculum Development	3 credits
Program Management	3 credits

Information about the Program Director Credential is on the Northern Lights website (see Resources).

Highly Qualified Paraprofessional

This designation is given by the public schools to paraprofessionals who work for them. In general, schools require an associate degree in a related field, but each school district determines how their staff can meet the requirements for this designation. Paraprofessionals work under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher. They provide instructional support, one-on-one tutoring, and other functions in the school. Information is on the Northern Lights website (see Resources) and at your local public school.

Benefits and incentives of professional development in the Awareness Phase:

- Feel pride in your accomplishment as a professional in Vermont's afterschool field
- Meet child care licensing regulations
- Support your professional growth
- Build a foundation for continued professional growth. When you complete any of the activities in the Awareness Phase, you have already begun to meet the requirements for the next phases
- Apply for scholarships for staff working in programs regulated by the Child Development Division (CDD) to take college coursework
- Attend low cost college courses (required for the Program Director Credential) that are contracted by the Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC)
- Benefit from a financial incentive for individuals who are working on the OJT Certificate, and a recognition bonus (from the Child Development Division) for those who complete the Afterschool Foundation Certificate and work in a regulated child care program

The Vermont Afterschool Foundations Certificate looks good on my resume.

The trainings I did for the Foundations Certificate helped me feel more competent in my work. I better understand my skills in each competency area, and now I'm applying all of the learning I did to the next step - to meeting the requirements for the Vermont After school Professional Credential (VAPC).

The OJT Program made me more aware of my everyday interactions with children. Some days you leave work and don't remember what you did because it was such a whirlwind. OJT made me stop the whirlwind and really pay attention to what I was doing. I'm glad I had the experience of doing the Program. I learned a lot from my role models.

OJT was the best thing that could have happened to help me in my learning! I learned not only from my teachers but also learned a lot from the children I work with everyday. Working side by side with my mentors gave me hands-on learning, information, and they modeled the behaviors for me. As a student at CCV, I was able to use my work experience with the children for my classes.

Developing Phase

On-the-Job Training (OJT) Certificate

This certificate is earned through a specialized program available through the Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC) and the Vermont Department of Labor. OJT allows afterschool professionals in regulated settings to combine their work and learning experiences. Participants in OJT:

- Accumulate and document 1,000 hours of work experience
- Have a current CPR & First Aid card
- Document 45 hours of community-based and/or college level training related to the Afterschool Core Competencies.

It typically takes one to three years to complete the program, depending on the individual. Participants receive financial incentives along the way. For more information, contact VCCICC (see Resources).

Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential (VAPC)

This credential based on the Vermont Afterschool Core Competencies, is for afterschool professionals, who have at least 500 hours of work experience in a program with school age children.

Applicants for the VAPC must complete the following:

- Two, three-credit, on-line higher education courses (available through CCV): Introduction to Afterschool Education & Care and Development of the School-Age Child
- A professional portfolio
- Additional training in the Afterschool Core Competency areas totaling 46-hours as outlined below:

Training	Hours
Curriculum & Learning Environment	16 hours
Families & Community	6 hours
Healthy & Safe Environments	6 hours
Professionalism & Program Organization	6 hours
Electives	Candidate chooses 12 hours across all Core Competency areas

Individuals who are awarded the credential have demonstrated the knowledge and skills to:

- Maintain a safe and healthy environment for school age children
- Incorporate educational experiences into the out-of-school hours
- Support social and emotional development and provide positive guidance
- Establish positive relationships with families and the community
- Ensure a well-run, purposeful program that is responsive to the needs of the participants
- Maintain a commitment to professionalism

For more information see the Northern Lights website (see Resources) or contact Kerrie Workman, kwork23@yahoo.com or 802-434-5046.

The Child Development Division may award a recognition bonus for individuals who are awarded the VAPC.

Highly Qualified Paraprofessional

This designation is given by the public schools to paraprofessionals who work for them. In general, schools require an associate's degree in a related field, but each school district determines how their staff can meet the requirements for this designation. Paraprofessionals work under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher. They provide instructional support, one-on-one tutoring, and other functions in the school. Information is on the Northern Lights website (see Resources) and at your local public school.

The Core Competencies validated what I was doing in my job and applying for the credential helped me to be more focused on the possibilities in my work.

Vermont Program Director Credential for Afterschool and Early Education Professionals: Step Two Certificate

This credential process has three steps, requiring college coursework and a portfolio to achieve the credential. The first two steps of the credential process are awarded as a certificate. Step One requires nine college credits as described in the **Awareness Phase** above. Step Two requires additional courses in the following topic areas:

College Coursework Focus	Credits
Leadership, Mentoring, and Supervision for Practitioners	3 credits
Legal and Financial Issues	3 credits
Human Resources Management	3 credits
Total credits	9 credits

Information about the Program Director Credential is on the Northern Lights website (see Resources).

Educator Licensure

The Vermont Department of Education (DOE) confers educator licensure to qualified professionals. Professionals can earn this license either by completing the requirements through a) graduating from a college or university that is designated to recommend for Vermont Department of Education (DOE) educator licensure, b) Vermont DOE approval of an educator license from another state, or c) approval through DOE peer review process. Current Vermont educator licensure requires students to have liberal arts major in addition to taking education coursework.

For detailed information go to the Vermont Department of Education or the Northern Lights websites (see Resources).

Benefits and incentives of professional development in the Developing Phase:

- Feel pride in your accomplishment as a professional in Vermont’s afterschool field
- Support your professional growth and expand your

professional options. Completed college courses may also contribute to an academic degree or certificate program

- Distinguish yourself as a leader in the field with the Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential and Program Director Credential
- Build a foundation for continued professional growth. When you complete activities in the Developing Phase, you have already begun to meet the requirements for the Achievement phase
- Meet program regulations or requirements for staff. The Afterschool Professional Credential is also recognized in Vermont’s STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) program quality and improvement system
- Scholarships are available from the Child Development Division (CDD) for staff or consultants working in regulated child care programs to take college courses related to their work (see Resources)
- Coursework that is required for the credentials is available at low cost. Two CCV college courses specifically for afterschool professionals meet the Afterschool Professional and Program Director Credential requirements. Some of the college courses required for the Program Director credential, are also contracted by the Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC) at a reduced cost to students. Northern Lights offers scholarships to professionals taking specific coursework for the Program Director Credential (see Resources)
- There is a Recognition Bonus (from the Child Development Division) awarded to those who complete the Afterschool Professional Credential and work in a regulated child care program

Achievement Phase

Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential (VAPC)

This credential based on the Vermont Afterschool Core Competencies, is for afterschool professionals who have at least 500 hours of work experience in a program with school age children.

Applicants for the VAPC must complete the following:

- Two, three-credit, on-line higher education courses (available through CCV): Introduction to Afterschool Education & Care and Development of the School-Age Child
- A professional portfolio
- Additional training in the After School Core Competency areas totaling 46-hours as outlined below:

Training	Hours
Curriculum & Learning Environment	16 hours
Families & Community	6 hours
Healthy & Safe Environments	6 hours
Professionalism & Program Organization	6 hours
Electives	Candidate chooses 12 hours across all Core Competency areas
Total Hours	46

Individuals who are awarded the credential have demonstrated the knowledge and skills to:

- Maintain a safe and healthy environment for school age children
- Incorporate educational experiences into the out-of-school hours
- Support social and emotional development and provide positive guidance
- Establish positive relationships with families and the community
- Ensure a well-run, purposeful program that is

responsive to the needs of the participants

- Maintain a commitment to professionalism

For more information see the Northern Lights website (see Resources) or contact Kerrie Workman, kwork23@yahoo.com or 802-434-5046.

The Child Development Division may award a recognition bonus for individuals who are awarded the VAPC.

Vermont Program Director Credential for Afterschool and Early Education Professionals

This credential process has three steps, requiring college coursework and a portfolio to achieve the credential. Steps One and Two each require nine college credits for a total of 18 credits (see **Awareness and Developing Phases**). The final step requires completion of the three-credit culminating seminar and the professional portfolio. Information about the Program Director Credential is on the Northern Lights website (see Resources).

Educator Licensure

The Vermont Department of Education (DOE) confers educator licensure to qualified professionals. Professionals can earn this license either by meeting the requirements through a) graduating from a college or university that is designated to recommend for Vermont Department of Education (DOE) educator licensure, b) approval by Vermont DOE of an educator license from another state, or c) approval through peer review. Current Vermont educator licensure requires students to have a liberal arts major in addition to taking education coursework. For detailed information go to the Vermont Department of Education website or the Northern Lights website (see Resources).

Helping other afterschool programs work on best practices has been more rewarding than I envisioned.

Other related opportunities in the Achievement Phase:

Instructor Registry

The Northern Lights Instructor Registry supports and promotes quality instruction of adults working in early childhood and afterschool programs in Vermont. Applicants apply online, through the Northern Lights website. The Northern Lights Instructor Registry approval panel reviews the applicant's experience teaching adults, formal education in adult learning, and completed education in the content areas they teach. Instructor levels recognize and support new instructors, proficient instructors and specialists with specific content knowledge. The Instructor Registry identifies and promotes qualified instructors, helps training sponsors search for instructors, establishes a pathway for developing instructors, and provides instructor resources.

Information is on the Northern Lights website (see Resources).

Coaching for Program Directors

The Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence (VCAE) hosts ongoing facilitated learning modules across the state, on topics such as financial management, video production, global learning, literacy, etc. for afterschool program directors. The goal of this coaching model is to strengthen directors' administrative, program planning, and evaluation skills.

See the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence website for more information (see Resources).

Mentors for Quality

The Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence offers seasoned professionals opportunities to mentor afterschool programs through the "Mentors for Quality" program. Professionals are trained to be mentors, providing technical assistance to qualified afterschool programs that want to increase their quality.

See the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence website for more information (see Resources).

Benefits and incentives of professional development in the Achievement Phase:

- Pride in your accomplishment as a professional in Vermont's afterschool field
- Recognition as a leader in the field and in the community. Colleagues turn to you for mentoring, coaching or instruction
- Knowledge that your work strengthens your ongoing professional development, the field and the quality of programs for Vermont's children and youth
- Adherence to program regulations or requirements for staff
- Membership in the Instructor Registry that includes professional support. The workshop: "Orientation to Teaching Adults" is offered around the state at low cost, by the Resource Development Specialists (see Resources). Inexperienced instructors can work with certified or master level instructors as they develop their skills
- Credentials (both Program Director and Afterschool Professional) that are recognized in Vermont's STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) program quality and improvement system: staff qualifications and professional development arena
- Scholarships from the Child Development Division (CDD) for staff and consultants working in regulated child care programs to take college courses related to their work (see Resources)
- Low-cost coursework required for these credentials. Some of the college courses required for the Program Director Credential are also contracted by the Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC), at a reduced cost to students. Northern Lights offers scholarships to professionals taking specific coursework for the Program Director Credential (see Resources)
- A recognition bonus to professionals who complete the Program Director Credential and work in a regulated child care program, awarded by the Child Development Division

Certificates, Credentials, Degrees and Educator Licensure

Certificates, credentials, academic degrees and educator licensure can be obtained separately, or in conjunction with the completion of an Early Childhood Career Level or Afterschool Phase.

Within Vermont's professional development system, a **certificate** is defined as recognition of completion of a program of study or training. A certificate recognizes an individual's participation or performance based on a defined set of knowledge and skills.

Vermont Early Childhood and Afterschool Certificates

- Early Childhood Level Certificates
- Afterschool Foundations Certificate
- Program Director Steps One and Two Certificates
- Certificate of Completion: Vermont Child Care Apprenticeship Program
- Child Care Professional Certificate
- CCV Child Care Certificate
- Instructor Registry Certificate
- Certificates of Attendance

A **credential** is defined as recognition of competency, based on established professional standards set by a recognized institution or professional organization. Credentials often require a portfolio or observation to document achievement.

Vermont Early Childhood and Afterschool Credentials

- Afterschool Professional Credential
- Program Director Credential (completion of Steps One-Three)
- Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential (National)
- Vermont Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Credential
- National Afterschool Credential (pending)
- Infant/Toddler Credential (pending)

An **academic degree** is a position or title awarded by an accredited college or university. It recognizes that the individual has completed a prescribed course of study or scholarly body of work that is worthy of a degree.

Vermont recognizes both related degrees and/or related coursework in meeting the educational requirements associated with career levels and pathways.

Academic Degrees

- Associate (60 credits)
- Bachelor (120 credits)
- Master (30 or more credits after Bachelor Degree)
- Doctorate (after Master Degree)

Educator Licensure

The Vermont Department of Education's Licensing office administers regulations and procedures for educator licensing. Most individuals who become licensed as teachers or administrators have graduated from state approved preparation programs and received a recommendation for licensure from their college or university. Licensed educators also receive endorsements that define the age range and/or topics they are licensed to teach. Vermont also recognizes Peer Review, as an alternative route to licensure, for those individuals with a bachelor's degree who want to also have educator licensure, but have not completed an approved preparation program. The Peer Review process requires individuals to show documentation of coursework and experiences that show they have acquired the knowledge and skills needed to meet the 16 Principles for Vermont Educators and the competencies and requirements for the endorsements they seek.

Additional information is on the Department of Education and Northern Lights websites (see Resources).

Instructors, Mentors, Coaches, and Consultants

Some experienced professionals achieve their Early Childhood Level Certificate, Program Director Credential or Afterschool Professional Credential and then think, *now what?* If they are interested in advancing their skills by working in more depth with other professionals in the field, there are a number of professional and career options available.

Vermont Instructor Registry

The Instructor Registry is found on the Northern Lights website (see Resources). Adult instruction is a skill separate from teaching children, working with families or supervising staff. The purpose of the Instructor Registry is to:

- Identify instructors who have met established criteria for high quality instruction of adults
- Establish a clear pathway for instructor development
- Be a resource for those who seek to hire instructors
- Act as a promotional marketing tool for instructors
- Provide networking, foster collegiality and support instructors of adults

The online application considers an applicant's a) education and credentials, b) current experience teaching adults, and c) formal instruction in adult learning principles and practices. The accepted application also serves as a profile that sponsors of professional development may use to choose an instructor.

The Instructor Registry has six different levels.

- Affiliate I and Affiliate II: for those developing skills and experience in instructing adults skills
- Specialist I and II: for those with limited, specialty knowledge such as medical or legal knowledge
- Certified Level
- Master Level

Affiliate I, II and Specialist I Instructors, receive support from Certified and Master Instructors.

Instructors in the Registry are regularly sought out by sponsors of professional development activities, to provide trainings, workshops and courses. Higher education faculty can use a streamlined process to apply to the Instructor Registry.

Mentoring, Advising, Teaching, Coaching, Consultation, Help (MATCH)

Professionals provide these services to early childhood and afterschool staff and programs all over the state.

Many management jobs in the early childhood and afterschool fields already require these skills. Some individuals provide these services informally to their colleagues and peers.

Research and experience have clearly shown that quality, professional skills and knowledge develop faster when effective, individualized support is provided based on a clear plan of action for change. That support must be tailored to the individual and responsive to the context in which that person works. We know that MATCH professionals must be skilled and knowledgeable in order to provide this individualized and responsive support.

Vermont is developing MATCH as a formal system to enhance the development and quality of early childhood and afterschool staff and programs. It will ensure that mentors, coaches, consultants and advisors are consistently available to provide skilled, informed, quality services to early childhood and afterschool professionals and to the programs in which they work. MATCH will be part of the professional development system in Vermont. It will include the following components:

- Competencies describing the skills, knowledge and beliefs that MATCH professionals need to have
- Training for MATCH professionals to support their development and attainment of the competencies
- A searchable, online registry of MATCH professionals

Contact Northern Lights Career Development Center to learn more about the development of MATCH.

Mentors for Quality

The Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence offers seasoned professionals opportunities to mentor afterschool programs through the "Mentors for Quality" program. Professionals are trained to be mentors, providing technical assistance to qualified afterschool programs that want to increase their quality.

See the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence website for more information (see Resources).

Career Advising Early Childhood and Afterschool Professionals

An advisor is a person who has information, resources and skills to help adults in their professional development. For Early Childhood and Afterschool advisors, information and resources are found in many different places and are continually changing. Advisors need to maintain their professional networks and updated information in order to continue to be helpful.

Some of the people who have advising skills and knowledge are:

- Supervisors and program directors
- Starting point leaders and colleagues
- Mentors and consultants
- Instructors
- College advisors and coordinators
- Resource Development Specialists (at 12 regional Community Child Care Support agencies)
- Northern Lights Career Development Center staff
- Child Development Division staff
- Vermont Department of Education staff
- Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence staff
- Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (Apprenticeship program) staff
- Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VAEYC) staff and board members
- Vermont Child Care Providers Association (VC-CPA) board members
- Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) staff

The Resources section of this document lists websites for all of these organizations.

Resource Tools for Advisors

Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

Most early childhood and afterschool professionals are required to have a current IPDP. An IPDP has four sections:

1. Self-assessment
2. Goals
3. Strategies and resources to meet the goals
4. Timeline

This outline is also a useful guide for career planning. The Northern Lights website and booklet *IPDP - Planning your Professional Growth*, are tools for the advisor, the student or the practitioner seeking guidance.

My advisor lives in a different town but I can reach her by email or phone easily, and sometimes we set up a time to skype, which I really like.

MATCH (mentoring, advising, teaching, coaching, consulting, help)

Vermont is integrating professionals with MATCH skills into the statewide professional development system. Once this project is implemented, individuals and programs will be able to search a directory of qualified MATCH professionals, including career advisors. There will also be a common set of competencies for those who provide MATCH services.

Full information will be on the Northern Lights Career Development Center website.

As an advisor, I am always checking websites to make sure I have the current information and learn what else is out there. When I am stuck I ask my network of colleagues. When I learn of a new resource tool I always add it to my resource file.

Financial Resources (see also Resources)

There are many different financial resources available in Vermont for college credit and non college credit professional development activities. Many professional development workshops and classes are free of charge or low cost to participants. Check with the sponsor of the activity. Some, but not all of the resources below require the applicant to be working in regulated child care.

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC)

www.vvac.org: This statewide organization has advisors with the latest information on college loans, grants, loan forgiveness, scholarships, and college planning. They are also the source for:

- Non-degree grants to pay for courses that will improve employability or encourage further study
- Vermont Incentive Grants for Vermonters accepted or enrolled in an undergraduate degree or certificate program, will be attending college full-time, and don't already have a bachelor's degree
- Federal Student Assistance Grants are available to qualified students that are enrolled in a degree program. For an application go to www.fafsa.ed.gov and fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Information or applications can also be found at your college or university's student aid office
- Private education loans - for further assistance, if grants, scholarships and federal loans don't cover all education costs or if a student's family does not qualify for a PLUS loan
- Scholarships - information on more than 150 scholarships for Vermont residents

College course work and degrees: other financial support:

- Vermont Child Development Division provides grants to Vermont residents taking a college course related to working with children or youth. Applicants must be working in or consulting to regulated child care programs in Vermont. (see Resources)
- Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC): Six undergraduate level courses are contracted by VCCICC from the Community College of Vermont. These six courses are tuition-free to staff working in regulated child care, and are offered in different regions of Vermont. Child

care professionals that are NOT in the Child Care Apprenticeship Program, may also take the courses, as room allows. The six courses are:

1. Communication in the Early Childhood and Afterschool Workplace
2. Infant Toddler Development and Care
3. Development of the Young Child: Ages Three to Eight
4. Curriculum Development for Early Childhood Education
5. Program Management for Early Childhood Education
6. Leadership, Mentoring and Supervision for Early Childhood and Afterschool Practitioners

These courses may also be offered directly by CCV, in which case students are responsible for CCV tuition and fees.

College or university financial support: Some colleges and universities have grants, loans or scholarships. It is important to ask the financial aid office at your school about any grants or scholarships. See the list of colleges and universities in Vermont and nearby states on the Northern Lights website

Community-based scholarships: civic organizations, churches, businesses, and other community-based groups offer scholarships for degree programs. Ask in your local community or see the scholarship booklet from VSAC

Federal tax credit: The IRS offers credits for your federal taxes called the Hope and Life Time Learning Educational Credits. You may be able to deduct certain expenses related to tuition and fees. Learn more at <http://www.irs.gov>

Financial Assistance for specific courses leading to a Credential:

Program Director Credential Courses: Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center (see Resources). There are seven courses (or equivalent) required to meet the education requirement for this credential. These courses may have been completed at any time. Five of the courses that may meet the requirements are offered by the VCCICC including:

1. Infant Toddler Development and Care
2. Development of the Young Child: Ages Three to Eight

3. Curriculum Development for Early Childhood Education
4. Program Management for Early Childhood Education
5. Leadership, Mentoring and Supervision for Early Childhood and Afterschool Practitioners

Contact Northern Lights for more information about scholarships available to program director applicants for the other three required courses:

- Human Resources
- Legal and Financial Issues in Early Childhood and Afterschool Programs
- Culminating Seminar of the Program Director Credential

Afterschool Professional Credential: There are two online contracted Community College of Vermont courses offered for free or low cost to those seeking this credential and working in regulated child care

1. Introduction to Afterschool Education & Care
2. Special Topics in Education: Development of the School Age Child, Ages 5-12

Vermont Higher Education Collaborative (VT-HEC)
www.VTHEC.org VT-HEC is a network of graduate programs that can lead to endorsement or degrees for educators, administrators, and specialists. Coursework can lead to educator licensure with an endorsement in Early Childhood or Early Childhood Special Education and other areas. Courses are offered at a reduced rate and some scholarships are available. You do not have to be seeking educator licensure to access this coursework.

In addition to the resources listed above, specific options such as Assessment of Prior Learning, Course Challenge, CLEP tests and transfer credit options provide college credit to the successful applicant for less than it would cost to enroll in traditional college courses.

See the sections Level III and IV in this Career Advising Guide as well as the Resources section.

Other Financial Supports for professional development:

Vermont Child Development Division (see Resources)

The Child Development Division provides specific grants as listed below and also contracts with sponsors of professional development, which helps increase opportunities and subsidizes professional development classes and workshops

- College course tuition scholarship to individuals working in regulated child care programs.
- Professional development tuition costs to consultants working with regulated child care
- Professional Recognition Bonus to individuals who achieve a step on the Early Childhood Career Ladder or Afterschool Pathway or gain a credential (see also Alignment grid)
- Statewide and regional collaborative grants to sponsors of professional development activities
- Grants to pay application fees
 - Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) application fee
 - Peer Review Assessment Fee (partial) for those applying to earn Vermont Department of Education educator licensure with Early Childhood endorsement, through peer review
 - Child Care Professional Credential application fee

Place of employment: If your employer requires you to attend training in order to maintain your employment (as stated in a written contract), then the employer must also support you to take the training. Employers, including school districts, often have funds to support professional development of staff. It never hurts to ask!

The 12 regional community child care support agencies, provide free or low cost professional development for Early Childhood and afterschool professionals in their region (see Resources for complete contact information)

Standards of Quality

Advisors and those they support need to recognize the frameworks that define quality for the early childhood and afterschool fields. These are the standards or guidelines for these fields. They are used to build curriculum for children, plan courses for adults, frame self-assessment by students and professionals, design strategic plans, and more. They are the foundational structures that all professionals should know and use. Because the early childhood and afterschool fields cross many disciplines and settings, there are many different standards and guidelines, determined in part by the related regulatory body or institution.

Standards for professionals, for programs and guidelines for children all connect to provide the foundation of quality in the early childhood and afterschool fields. Like gears, these three standards interconnect.



Standards for professionals who work in early childhood and afterschool settings include:

- Competencies for early childhood and for afterschool professionals (as outlined earlier in this booklet)
- Vermont Department of Education Professional Standards
- Professional standards for related specialists such as social work, nursing, physical therapy, etc.

Standards or Guidelines for children who attend the early childhood and afterschool programs:

These inform the professional, the families and the programs that serve the children. They are not a curriculum or an assessment but they may guide both of these activities.

- Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) for three to five year olds
- First Steps - guidelines for infants and toddlers (pending)
- VT Department of Education Common Core and Grade Level Expectations

Standards for programs that serve young, school age and older children in regulated settings:

These define the components of a quality program. The foundation standards are set in law by Vermont child care licensing. Vermont STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS), national accreditation, and Head Start program monitoring build from this foundation. Standards are measured by program self-assessment, documentation and outside evaluation by observation. Staff qualifications and professional development are a component of program standards.

The next page lists various program standards and how they relate to staff professional development.



Program Quality and Professional Development

One measure of program quality is the quality of the staff that works in the program. All program quality measures require staff to meet specified standards of education and/or experience. Career advisors need to know about measures of program quality as well as professional development pathways in order to provide complete and accurate guidance. Websites with the updated and detailed requirements for each of these programs are in the Resources section.

Measures of Program Quality in Vermont

Measure	Program Setting	Reviewing Agency	Notes on Professional Development Criteria
Child care licensing regulations (Vermont)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered family child care homes • Licensed child care centers and homes • Licensed afterschool programs • Licensed non-recurring care (often in ski industry businesses) 	Child Development Division (CDD)	<p>These are the foundation requirements for all child care programs, their staff and administrators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirements include completed education and annual professional development hours • Public School Early Childhood programs are also required to be licensed by the Child Development Division • Not all Afterschool programs are licensed by CDD
STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered family child care homes • Licensed child care centers and homes • Licensed afterschool programs • Licensed non-recurring care (often in ski industry businesses) 	STARS administrators (Vermont)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 1 to 5 star level is awarded based on the total number of points earned across all arenas. One arena is Staff Qualifications and Annual Professional Development. • Being in compliance with child care licensing regulations is a minimum requirement • Licensed Early Childhood programs funded by public schools must have a minimum of four stars with a minimum of 2 points in each arena, or three Stars with an approved plan to achieve four stars within three years. • Aligns with Northern Lights Career Ladder and credentials
National Association for the Education of Young Children) Accreditation (NAEYC)	Licensed Early Childhood programs	NAEYC Accreditation of Programs for Young Children (national accreditation)	<p>Streamlined Alignment process with 5 STARS</p> <p>See website for annual professional development, academic degrees and program director requirements</p>
National Association of Family Child Care Accreditation (NAFCC)	Registered or Licensed family child care home	NAFCC (national accreditation)	<p>Streamlined Alignment process with STARS</p> <p>See website for annual professional development, academic degrees and experience requirements</p>
Council on Accreditation (COA)	Afterschool programs	Council on Accreditation (national accreditation)	<p>Streamlined alignment process with five STARS</p> <p>See website for professional development requirements</p>
Head Start: Office of Head Start Monitoring Protocol or Triennial Review based on the Head Start Performance Standards and CLASS scores	<p>Head Start programs</p> <p>Licensed Early Childhood centers and family child care partners</p>	<p>Office of Head Start (federal review)</p> <p>Administration for Children and Families</p>	<p>Streamlined alignment process with STARS</p> <p>See Head Start standards for in-service and academic degree requirements</p>

Supports to meet Program Quality and Recognition
(see Resources for contact information)

- STARS administrators, and regional Resource Development Specialists provide technical assistance to programs applying for STARS
- The Child Development Division (CDD) offers *Program Quality Grants* to defray the cost of applying for program accreditation. Applications are available on the CDD website: <http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd>
- Mentors for Quality at the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence provide support to afterschool programs seeking STARS or national accreditation
- Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VAEYC) provides technical assistance and other supports to programs applying for NAEYC Accreditation
- Vermont Child Care Providers Association provides technical assistance to programs applying for the National Family Child Care (NAFCC) Accreditation



Resources

Please visit the Northern Lights Career Development Center website www.northernlightscdc.org to view and download this booklet.

The website has the most current information including:

- Live links to all of the resources below
- Links to the regional Resource Development Specialists, financial assistance, professional organizations, and more
- Career ladder and pathways information for early childhood and afterschool professionals, including competency documents, information about credentials, academic degrees, and educator licensure
- Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) forms, samples and guidance

Other Resources Referenced in this Booklet

<p>Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) <u>Help Desk:</u> Get a username, password or change your log-in to your own Quality and Credential account</p> <p><u>BFIS Website:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Login on and view your private Quality and Credential Account (under RESUME), create your online IPDP • Search the statewide course calendar 	<p>http://bfishelp.ahs.state.vt.us</p> <p>http://brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us</p>
<p>Council for Professional Recognition Award the national Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)</p>	<p>http://www.cdacouncil.org</p>
<p>Vermont Child Development Division</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under “professional development” find grants and scholarship applications • Links to other resources 	<p>http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd</p>
<p>Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence Professional development, certificates, credentials and resource information for afterschool programs and professionals in Vermont</p>	<p>http://vermontafterschool.org</p>
<p>Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VAEYC) Professional, member organization; an affiliate of the National AEYC</p>	<p>http://www.vaeyc.org</p>

<p>Vermont Department of Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional standards for educators • Educator licensure and endorsements • Peer review process for licensure • IPDP requirements for educators 	<p>http://education.vermont.gov</p>
<p>Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vermont Child Care Apprenticeship Program and courses • On the Job Training 	<p>http://www.vermontchildcareindustry.org</p>
<p>Vermont Child Care Providers Association (VCCPA) Support for CDA, STARS and NAFCC program accreditation</p>	<p>http://vccpa.org</p>
<p>Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide and regional advisors with the latest information on college loans, grants, loan forgiveness, scholarships, and college planning. • The source for non-degree grants, Vermont Incentive Grants, Federal Student Assistance, private education loans and scholarships 	<p>www.vsac.org</p>
<p>Vermont Career and Technical Centers</p>	<p>http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_teched/programs.html</p>

Learning Standards & Guidelines for Children and Youth

<p>Vermont Early Learning Standards - ages three to six</p>	<p>www.dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/2006-03-29-VELS_booklet.pdf</p>
<p>Vermont Department of Education Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities PreK-12</p>	<p>http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pubs/framework.pdf</p>

Program Standards and Accreditation

<p>Center on Accreditation (COA) National afterschool program accreditation agency</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">http://www.coastandards.org/</p>
<p>National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National center-based early childhood program accreditation • Professional organization for early educators 	<p style="text-align: center;">www.naeyc.org</p>
<p>National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National family child care program accreditation • Professional organization for family child care providers 	<p style="text-align: center;">www.nafcc.org</p>
<p>National Early Childhood Program Accreditation National child care program accreditation for small programs</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">http://www.necpa.net/index.php</p>
<p>Vermont STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vermont program quality recognition and improvement system • Includes early childhood, afterschool and family child care programs 	<p style="text-align: center;">http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/stars/</p>
<p>National Head Start Association (NHSA) Nationally program standards and resources for regional Head Start programs</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">www.nhsa.org</p>

College and University Degrees and Coursework

<p>Vermont Colleges and Universities</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">http://education.vermont.gov/</p>
<p>Vermont Higher Education Collaborative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate coursework toward degrees and educator licensure • Through Lyndon State College 	<p style="text-align: center;">www.VTHEC.org</p>

<p>CLEP (College Level Examination Program)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 different national computer exams on topics such as human growth and development, college composition (English), math, and business courses. • Community College of VT and some other colleges monitor the exam in Vermont • Passing the exam equates to a college credit course 	<p>http://clep.collegeboard.org/</p> <p>www.ccv.edu</p>
<p>Assessment of Prior Learning (APL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document learning gained through work or other experiences and submit for college credit • May earn many credits at once • Vermont State College Office of External Programs offers an APL course that prepares you to request the credits • Once awarded, the credits may transfer to other colleges • Some colleges assess prior learning to award transfer or waived credit to incoming students 	<p>http://www.vsc.edu/Pages/Special-Programs.aspx</p>
<p>Course Challenge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For students already in a degree or certificate program at the Community College of Vermont • Request an assessment to determine if you have already met the learning objectives for a specific course • May be awarded credit for that course 	<p>http://www.vsc.edu/Pages/Special-Programs.aspx</p>

Ethical Standards for Professionals

<p>NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct</p>	<p>http://faculty.weber.edu/tlday/2610/code05.pdf</p>
<p>NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct Supplement for Administrators</p>	<p>http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PS-ETH05_supp.pdf</p>
<p>Vermont Department of Education: Code of Professional Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct for Vermont Educators</p>	<p>http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pgmprostandards/vsbpe/rules/educ_550_0_licensing_ethics_code.pdf</p>

Selected Advocacy Organizations

Voices for Vermont Children	http://www.voicesforvtrkids.org/
Kids are Priority One Coalition	http://www.kidsarepriorityone.org/
National Education Association	http://www.nea.org/
American Federation of Teachers	http://www.aft.org/

Appendix

College Course Work Alignment: Early Childhood and Afterschool Career Pathways

October 2011

This chart shows how an individual course can be used to achieve different certificates, credentials and degrees.

College Courses Offered by CCV, VSC and Other Colleges # offered through Union Institute and University (x) an elective	Level I	Level II and III	Level IIIA	Level IIIA	Level IIIA	After school and Early Childhood Program Director Credential			Afterschool Credential	Level IIIB Associate Degree 60 credits
	3 credits	12 or 21 credits	Child Care Apprenticeship: VCCICC Sponsored	Child Care Certificate 27 credits	Step One	Step Two	Step Three			
Fundamentals for the Early Childhood Professional	X	X								
Introduction to Early Childhood Education	X	X		X						
Communication in the Early Childhood Workplace		X	X	X						X
Infant Toddler Child Development	X	X	X	One of these	One of these					(X)
Child Development ages 3-8	X	X	X	X	X					(X)
Child Development birth to adolescent	X	X							X	X
Special Topics in Afterschool- Development of the School Age Child										
Curriculum ages 3-8		X	X	(X)	X					(X)
Introduction to Afterschool Services		X							X	
Program Management		X	X	(X)	X					(X)
Leadership, Mentoring and Supervision		X	X	(X)				X		(X)
Human Resources		X		(X)				X		(X)
# Legal and Financial Issues in early childhood and after school settings		X		(X)				X		
# Culminating Seminar: Program Director Credential		X		(X)					X	
Additional college courses				X						X

Early Childhood Career Ladder and alignment with the Professional Recognition Bonus (Oct. 1, 2009) and STARS (January 2010)

	Level I	Level II	Level IIIA	Level IIIB	Level IV (A & B)	Level V (A & B)
Northern Lights Career Ladder Levels	Each Level requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience - A current Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) and - Education. See the Northern Lights Career Ladder for details of options for each level 					
	1 year experience	2 years experience	2 years experience	2 years experience	2 years experience (can include student teaching)	
Professional Recognition Bonus from CDD *	\$100	\$500 initial \$150 for first CDA renewal	\$750	\$1000	\$1200 plus + \$500 for DOE teacher licensure	
STARS- staff qualifications arena ¹	Score 1	Score 4	Score 9	Score 12	Score 16 Score 20 with DOE licensure	Score 25

* CDD Recognition Bonus is awarded based on Career ladder level or credential attainment AND additional criteria

Points and recognition for other credentials

Program Director Credential – step 3 :

\$500 Professional Recognition Bonus

STARS - score 12 in the Educational Attainment portion of Teaching Staff Qualifications;

Afterschool Professional Credential

\$500 Professional Recognition Bonus

STARS – score 6 in the Educational Attainment part of Teaching Staff Qualifications

¹ This refers to “Educational Attainment” score, which is one of three parts in the Teaching Staff Qualifications and Annual Professional Development Arena; total score of all staff are converted to a single program STARS points for this arena

Acknowledgements

Vermont Career Advising Guide for Early Childhood Professionals was originally created and printed in 1998 by the Professional Preparation and Development Committee of the Vermont Early Childhood Workgroup. Revised in 2006 by Northern Lights Career Development Center, the booklet was also edited and reprinted in 2008. In 2010 the Professional Preparation and Development Committee (a workgroup of the Vermont Building Bright Futures Council) reviewed and made recommendations for changes to the document. Northern Lights Career Development Center used these recommendations to work with a small committee to make the current version of the Vermont Career Advising Guide for Early Childhood and Afterschool Professionals. This 2011 edition is the first to include both early childhood and afterschool fields.

Northern Lights Career Development staff wish to thank the Professional Preparation and Development Committee for their valuable review and recommendations, as well as Heather Mattison, Sue Ryan, Kerrie Workman, Marie Sullivan, Maureen Young- McCarthy and Nancy Sugarman for their many hours of work on this document. We also want to thank and acknowledge the many early childhood and afterschool professionals who provided perspective, questions and quotes that serve as the foundation for this work.



Community College of Vermont • PO Box 489 • Montpelier, VT 05601 • 802-828-2800
<http://northernlightscdc.org>