

# Vermont Early Childhood Career Ladder

## Level I

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

### What is the Career Ladder?

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

### Who should begin at Level I?

Individuals who are beginning to work in the early childhood field, or those who have worked in this field for a long time but do not have a related certificate or credential, should consider a Level I certificate.

### How do I apply for a Level I certificate?

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

- *Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals* course, OR
- One college course (3 credits) in (early) child development *plus* two workshops: *Basic Specialized Care*, and *Introduction to Child Care Licensing* and one approved observation of you working with children OR
- Northern Lights approved portfolio with 45 hours of verified training

### Why is completing Level I important?

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



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

### Resources:

#### Northern Lights Career Development Center website

- CAREER PATHWAYS - *Early Childhood Career Ladder and Core Competencies*
- RESOURCES - find your local Resource Development Specialist who offers *Fundamentals*
- TRAINING AND COURSEWORK - *Statewide Curricula* for details on the Fundamentals course

#### Community College of Vermont

<http://www.ccv.edu/>

#### Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS)

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/stars>

see Arena: *staff qualifications*

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

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

# Vermont Early Childhood Career Ladder Level I (continued)

## Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals

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

- observation of children
- health and safety
- planning learning environments
- professionalism and program organization
- child development: infants to preschoolers
- connecting to families and communities
- child care regulations & Basic Specialized Care
- including children with diverse needs

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

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

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

### What is the Northern Lights approved portfolio?

One way to complete the education requirement for Level I is to create a portfolio; it is like the Fundamentals course as an independent study. This option is useful if you have collected many hours of training over the years and like to write and organize your learning. You must contact Northern Lights before you plan to apply.

### What is the required *Observation*?

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

### What about the required *Experience*?

Level I requires a year of accumulated part-time or full-time experience working with children in groups. If you worked in regulated childcare, as part of your high school technical center program—that can count too!

<http://northernlightscdc.org>

Phone: (802)828-2876



### Did you know...?

The *Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals* course -

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

### More Resources:

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

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



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