



Earning Credentials and Understanding Career Ladders

Professional learning opportunities that focus specifically on infant and toddler care and development can help you improve and increase your skills and strategies for giving the responsive, relationship-based care that is best for infants and toddlers. High-quality care requires sensitive teacher-child interactions as well as teachers who have specialized knowledge and understanding of how infants and toddlers develop and learn (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2000). By understanding infants' and toddlers' dynamic and rapid development in these early years, you can consciously build strong, positive relationships; engage in responsive interactions; and create environments that support children's learning (Board on Children, Youth, and Families, & National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2015).

States and territories offer different forms of professional development opportunities for infant and toddler educators. Some offer credentials specifically for infant and toddler care; career ladders or lattices that define the type of training, credentials, and qualifications needed to advance as an infant and toddler professional; and higher education degrees specific to infant and toddler development and care. Begin your search for specific information by contacting the agency in your state or territory that administers the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program. To find contact information for the CCDF agency in your state or territory, go to <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdf-grantee-state-and-territory-contacts>. The Administration for Children and Families' Office of Child Care, which administers CCDF programs, requires that a portion of CCDF funds be spent on supporting and increasing quality in infant and toddler programs.

Your local child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agency can provide information and resources to support your professional growth, such as, financial support opportunities and incentives. To find the CCR&R agency near you, visit [Child Care Aware's CCR&R search webpage](#) and enter your zip code.

The following list of questions can help you identify potential resources to support your interest in advanced education and achievement in the field of infant and toddler care. Search for this information online or ask these questions at a CCR&R agency to start gathering information.

- ◆ Does your state or territory have a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS)?
- ◆ Does the QRIS include standards for infant and toddler teachers' education?
- ◆ Does your state or territory have workforce core knowledge and competencies for infant and toddler teachers?
- ◆ Does your state or territory have a CCR&R?
- ◆ Does the CCR&R have information and resources to support infant and toddler teachers' professional development?
- ◆ What accredited colleges in your community award degrees or credentials in early care and education specifically related to infants and toddlers?
- ◆ Does your state or territory have a career ladder or lattice that includes a credential specific to infants and toddlers?
- ◆ Does your state or territory have a training approval system and registry that is specific to infant and toddler requirements?
- ◆ Does your state or territory offer financial supports for infant and toddler professional development, such as grants, bonuses, wage supplements, and tax credits?



Reasons for Pursuing Advanced Credentials

Many QRIS require programs to hire teachers with higher levels of education and credentials. Teachers with advanced credentials in infant and toddler care and learning are in greater demand at child care programs that rank high in the state or territory's quality rating and improvement system. Teachers with higher levels of education or infant and toddler credentials may qualify for specific benefits, such as higher pay.

With advanced training and education, you build on your understanding and knowledge of development from birth to 3 years. You can learn how to use theory and research to your everyday work with children and families. Professional development often includes learning through a process called reflective practice, which is a way for professionals in many fields to purposefully think about and learn from experiences.

Resources

State and Territory Infant and Toddler Credentials

[*State/Territory Infant/Toddler Credential Overview*](#) (2014) is a resource that gives an overview of infant and toddler credentialing and other professional development efforts in states, as of 2014. (Please note that this document is under revision as of August 2017.) It was developed by the National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives, Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[*Infant/Toddler Credential Crosswalk: Child Development Associate \(CDA\) and State/Territory Credentials*](#) (2014) is a resource that compares infant and toddler center-based requirements for the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential with requirements for state-specific infant and toddler credentials and other professional development efforts, as of 2014. It was developed by the National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives, Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[*Infant/Toddler Credential Fact Sheet*](#) (n.d.) is a brief resource that describes, in plain language, different types of infant and toddler credentials and credential delivery systems, as of 2010. It was developed by the National Infant & Toddler Child Care Initiative, Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential

The Council for Professional Recognition gives an overview of how to earn a CDA Credential specific to infant and toddler care. Information is available in English and Spanish. The following webpages provide key information.

- ◆ [Steps to Earn Your Infant/Toddler CDA Credential](#);
- ◆ [Family Child Care CDA Credential \(age birth to 5 years\)](#);
- ◆ [Home Visitor CDA Credential \(age birth to 5 years\)](#);
- ◆ [State-specific information on CDA scholarships](#).

T.E.A.C.H.

T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps) Early Childhood is a scholarship program for professionals working in child care. Recipients can use the scholarships to help further their education and



complete coursework in early care and education. The following two programs are available in many areas to provide financial supports to child care providers who are pursuing advanced education and credentials:

- ◆ T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center
- ◆ T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project

Visit the [T.E.A.C.H. contact information webpage](#) to see if your state or territory participates.

Child Care Wage\$

[Child Care WAGE\\$](#) is a program that makes available education-based salary enhancements to increase teacher compensation.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Visit the [NAEYC Accredited Higher Education Programs webpage](#) for a list of NAEYC-accredited colleges and universities offering early care and education degrees in your state or territory.

Early Educator Central

Early Educator Central offers information, training, and courses specific to advancing your career as an infant and toddler professional. Visit the [Teachers and Family Child Care Providers webpage](#) for specific resources for teachers.

Resources on Career Pathways

[Early Childhood Career Pathways](#) is a website from the Office of Early Childhood Development that offers information and resources related to career pathways.

[Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation](#) (2015) is a report from the **Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies**. This report shares recommendations for the early childhood workforce.

References

Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2017). Early childhood career pathways [Web page]. Retrieved March 13, 2018, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ece/early-childhood-career-pathways>

Board on Children, Youth, and Families, & National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2015). *Child development and early learning: A foundation for professional knowledge and competencies*. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/~/media/Files/Report%20Files/2015/Birthto8/ProfKnowCompFINAL.pdf>

National Research Council & Institute of Medicine. (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early child development*. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.



T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center. (n.d.). Child Care WAGE\$ [Web page]. Retrieved March 13, 2018, from <http://teachechnationalcenter.org/child-care-wage>

The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with state and territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. The SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.

**State Capacity Building Center,
A Service of the Office of Child Care**

9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

Phone: 877-296-2401
Email: CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info

Subscribe to Updates
http://www.occ-cmc.org/occannouncements_sign-up/



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES