

Early Childhood Career Ladder Fact Sheet

What is the Vermont Early Childhood Career Ladder?

The Vermont Early Childhood Career Ladder is a tool for tracking and planning professional growth that identifies the six levels of professional development in the field of early childhood care and education. There are many different paths to take to develop your career, and you may enter at any level that matches your education and experience. Each new Level Certificate recognizes your accumulated skills and knowledge.

How do I apply for a Level Certificate?

Complete the Application Form and submit it to Northern Lights. Gather the following before you begin your application:

- List of prior work experience in the early childhood field and employer contact information
- Your current Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP), written or updated within the past three months
- The most recent versions of your transcript, including all coursework and training (if applicable, requirements vary by Level).
- Approved observation of you working with children (if applicable, requirements vary by Level)

Why is completing a Level important?

As you complete additional coursework and training, you are recognized for your accomplishment and commitment. You may also be eligible for a Child Development Division Professional Recognition bonus. Child Care Program Licensing and the Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) also recognize Level certificates.

What is the Northern Lights Approved Portfolio?

For Early Childhood professionals who have followed a unique pathway, a portfolio may be a great way to document your accomplishments and recognize your work in professional development. Your portfolio will demonstrate the collective hours of training you have completed and organizes your learning. If you want to submit a portfolio, please contact Northern Lights before you plan to apply.

What is the required Observation?

No matter which education requirement you use, you will need to be observed by an experienced mentor while you are working with children (some coursework includes observation). A co-teacher or mentor in your program or community can conduct an observation. Your observer provides supportive feedback about what she or he sees. Observation forms are available on the Northern Lights website. If you're having trouble finding an observer, your local Northern Lights Resource Advisor can help you.

What about the required Experience?

You will need to provide a list of your accumulated part- or full -time experience working with children in groups. If you worked in regulated child care as part of your high school technical center program, that can count too! We'll just need the contact information for your former employers.