

Northern Lights Early Childhood Career Ladder

The Northern Lights Early Childhood Career Ladder is a tool for tracking and planning professional growth. Each of the six levels requires a combination of completed education, professional experience with children and families, and a current Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP). You can start at any level.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Fundamentals for EC Professionals (45 hour training) OR 3 related college credits in child or human development, AND Introduction to Licensing training AND one observation of the practitioner OR Northern Lights Level I Portfolio (prior approval required)	Current Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential OR 12 related college credits in at least two Unified CKAs* and two observations of the practitioner	Level 3A Completed VT Child Care Apprenticeship Program OR CCV Child Care Certificate OR 21 related college credits in at least three Unified CKAs* and two observations of the practitioner	Level 4A Bachelor's Degree in ECE* or related field OR Bachelor's Degree with 30 related college credits in at least 3 Unified CKAs*	Level 5A Master's Degree in ECE* or a related field	Doctoral Degree in ECE* or a related field.
		Level 3B Associate Degree in ECE or a related field OR Associate Degree in any field with 21 related college credits in at least three Unified CKAs*	Level 4B Above with VT Educator License with endorsement in EC*, ECSE*, or elementary education	Level 5B Above with VT Educator License with endorsement in EC*, ECSE*, or elementary education	
Experience: One year or more	Experience: Two years or more	Experience: Two years or more	Experience: Two years or more, including student teaching	Experience: Two years or more	Experience: Two years or more

*Abbreviations used in this chart: CKA (Core Knowledge Area); EC (Early Childhood); ECE (Early Childhood Education); ECSE (Early Childhood Special Education)

What are Related Fields, Related Credits, and Core Knowledge Areas?

In Vermont, Related Fields include degrees with a major or concentration in early childhood, child or human development, elementary education, special education with a birth to eight focus, and child and family services.

Related Credits are credits earned from college coursework that meet the following criteria:

- Course relates to working with children birth through grade three and their families; and
- Course content clearly falls within one or more early childhood or afterschool core knowledge areas; and
- Credits are awarded by an appropriately accredited institution of higher education; and
- Student earned a grade of a C- or better in the course.

Unified Core Knowledge Areas: inclusive practices; curriculum and learning environments; observation and assessment; professionalism and ethical practice; youth engagement, voice, and choice; safety and wellness; and program planning and development.

For more detail about the Core Knowledge Areas and Competencies, visit the Northern Lights website or contact our staff.

What does it mean to achieve a Career Ladder Level?

You have achieved a milestone in your career pathway! A Level Certificate recognizes your skills and knowledge. By earning a Level Certificate you may also meet a requirement in the child care program regulations for staff and directors; earn a Professional Recognition bonus from the Child Development Division (CDD); and/or gain a higher score in the Vermont Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) staff qualifications arena.

Contact Northern Lights

If you would like assistance with your IPDP or any other career advising support, Northern Lights is here to help! You can contact your Resource Advisor directly, or you can contact our Senior Administrative Assistant for support. All Northern Lights staff are listed on our [Contact Us page](#).

You can reach our Senior Administrative Assistant during business hours at (802) 540-8168 or northernlights@ccv.edu. Many resources are available on the [Northern Lights Website](#).