

Early Childhood Career Ladder Fact Sheet

What is the Northern Lights Early Childhood Career Ladder?

The Northern Lights 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 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?

- Visit the [Career Ladder Application Page](https://go.northernlightsccv.org/portal/career_ladder) (go.northernlightsccv.org/portal/career_ladder)
- Sign in using your Northern Lights Account
- Click “Create Application”
- Begin your Northern Lights Career Ladder Level Certificate Application

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 an Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP)?

An Individual professional Development Plan (IPDP) is written by you to guide your continuing professional growth. It is an action plan that describes an ongoing process. There are two ways to have your IPDP entered into your BFIS account. You may enter it directly into BFIS by logging in to your Quality and Credentialing account, or by submitting a completed IPDP form to Northern Lights at CCV, for entry on your behalf, via Direct Send.

What is the required Observation?

Some Level Certificate educational pathways require you to be observed by a knowledgeable observer to provide supportive feedback while you work with children (some coursework includes observation). A co-teacher or mentor in your program or community can conduct an observation. 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?

Your professional experience working with children in a group must take place in a licensed, registered, or legally exempt child care program. Your high school technical center program experience can count too! Professional experience may include student teaching, and may be full-time or part-time.