



Careers in Early Childhood Education

The ABC's



There are many different career choices available in the field of child development that are personally fulfilling and support the healthy development of children. This guide can help you get started.

Planning a career in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

To prepare for any new adventure, you have to start at the beginning, decide where you want to go, how you will get there, and what you will need along the way. When you prepare for your professional career it requires the same steps. This guide will help put you on the right path to begin your career in Early Childhood Education.

Why is Early Childhood Education important?

The first years of a child's life create the foundation for a child's health, emotional well being and intellectual growth. Providing high-quality early care and education is critically important to enable children to learn and savor the building blocks of life. Working with children provides an opportunity to shape lives and ensure the future of our community. The careers available offer numerous opportunities that are both satisfying and rewarding.

A college degree in Early Childhood Education prepares you to teach infants and children through age twelve, in child development settings. Early learning teachers play a vital role in the development of young children. What children learn and experience during their early years can shape their views of

themselves and the world and can affect their later success in school, work and life.

As a student of Early Childhood Education, you will learn how children develop and what their educational needs are at each stage of their lives. You will study children's literature, learn how to teach the fundamentals of math, reading and science to young children, and value the importance and significance of play. You will study the history of Early Childhood Education and be able to recognize the unique challenges of this profession. Most importantly, you will study children; how they operate, what they think and how you can ensure that they reach their full potential.

You should consider an Early Childhood Education career if you:

- Appreciate the wonders of childhood discovery
- Seek and value your own continued self-discovery
- Are creative and energetic
- Are interested in the various ways children learn
- Have a desire to strengthen individuals, families and your community
- Have natural leadership skills and thrive on new challenges every day



Classes, degrees and permits

College courses can get you started in your work with children. With fewer than twelve college units in ECE, you can work as a teacher's assistant in a child development center, though many programs will require you to complete some units or enroll in classes.

Twelve ECE units are usually the minimum required to be considered a teacher in a child development center, though many programs require more education. You may be required to take specific courses or obtain a Child Development Permit which is offered by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. There are six levels of permits, each providing specific education and experience requirements ranging from the assistant level to the program director level. While many private child care centers do not require the Child Development Permit, having a permit can give you the extra edge you need to work in all types of programs, especially state- or federally-funded programs that follow stricter quality guidelines. An academic counselor at a local college can help you apply. See the Resources section to find a college near you.

As you advance in your education, you may earn a certificate or an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education. To earn a degree or certificate, you must complete a set number of units in core and elective ECE classes. Core classes are required for all students and electives are classes that you choose based on your needs and interests. To receive an Associate's degree, students must also complete general education classes that meet college requirements. General education refers to classes that all students must take in order to graduate, regardless of their degree choice. Both ECE certificates and Associate's degrees can be obtained at a local community college, such as American River College or Sacramento City College. You can earn your certificate or Associate's degree at the same time you are working on your Child Development Permit.

Community colleges may provide the education and field work experience necessary to start a career in child development; however, you may want to start with or continue on to complete a four-year bachelor's degree at a university or continue onto a master's degree or PhD program. The California State University system (such as Sacramento State University) and the University of California system (such as UC Davis) offer higher education to people who want to receive bachelor's and master's degrees, teaching credentials, PhDs, or who want to become licensed therapists or social workers in the child and



human development fields. Regardless of the path you choose, college units in child development or ECE can help you provide quality child care and may make it easier for you to find work in the field.

Taking the steps toward a new career

Whether you plan to be the lead teacher in a classroom, operate a child care business from your home

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With a degree or units in ECE, you can work in a variety of settings, such as child care programs, public schools, churches, government agencies, non-profit organizations, medical and health related services and social service agencies. Careers may include direct work with children, supervision and staff training, support and training to parents and other caregivers or community outreach and education about the needs of children.

Child Development Jobs

- Child Care Administrator/Director
- Children's Museum Project Coordinator
- Coach
- Nanny
- Playground Aide
- Preschool Teacher
- Elementary School Teacher
- Family Child Care Home Owner
- Home Visitor
- Family Services Worker
- Disabilities Specialist
- Nutritionist
- Human Resources Specialist
- Social Services Coordinator
- Parent Educator
- Resource and Referral Specialist
- Community Care Licensing Analyst

or develop a specialization that takes you out of the classroom, education and training are the keys to your success. Child Action, Inc., and your local college can help you get started. This document is a road map to help you plan your education and your future working with children and families.

Typical college courses include:

- Infant & Child Development
- Introduction to Early Childhood Education
- The Child, the Family & the Community
- Principles & Practices in Early Childhood Education
- Adult Supervision: Mentoring in a Collaborative Learning Setting
- Culture & Diversity in Early Childhood Education
- Introducing Young Children to Visual Arts
- Music and Movement with Young Children
- Children & Literature



Skills you will gain through college courses:

- The ability to promote the healthy development of children
- How to create appropriate learning environments for young children
- Multi-tasking
- Collaboration with parents and families
- Teamwork and leadership
- Active listening with patience and empathy
- Awareness of special needs and cultural differences
- Knowledge of how children learn
- Self-confidence and self-understanding
- An understanding of the different domains of child development
- Speaking and presentation skills

Resources:

California Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC)
www.caeyc.org
 Conferences, training, scholarships and information on quality care and early literacy.

California Association of Family Child Care (CAFCC)
www.cafcc.org
 Information on professional development and family child care business development.

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
www.ctc.ca.gov
 The state standards board for educator preparation for California public schools and state-funded child development programs.

California State University Sacramento (CSUS)
www.csus.edu
 Bachelor's and master's degrees in child development including classroom and fieldwork experience.

Child Development Training Consortium
 (209) 572-6080
www.childdevelopment.org
 Helps individuals meet the requirements for Child Development permits by reimbursing college tuition costs and permit fees to eligible child care providers.

Community Care Licensing (CCL) California Department of Social Services
www.ccl.ca.gov
 Provides information and applications for child care facility licenses and enforces basic health and safety standards.

Los Rios Community College District (LRCC)
www.losrios.edu
 Offers degrees and certificates in Early Childhood Education that meet the coursework requirements for Child Development permits.

University of California Davis (UC Davis)
www.ucdavis.edu
 Master's and PhD programs in child development.