

Texas Early Childhood Career Pathway

Often, early childhood professionals have challenges related to compensation and career advancement decisions. To continue to improve as a field, the early childhood profession needs clear and reliable steps for professionals to take in advancing their careers. The Texas Early Learning Council, an 18-member, Governor-appointed state advisory council on early education and care, developed the Texas Early Childhood Career Pathway as a tool to assist with these challenges.

Previously called the “Career Lattice,” the Texas Early Childhood Career Pathway defines levels of knowledge and skill mastery for practitioners and administrators within the early childhood profession and identifies steps for advancement in the pursuit of career development. The Career Pathway is a voluntary tool intended to work in concert with the *Texas Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners and Administrators*, a document created through a partnership between the Texas Early Learning Council and the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS) Advisory Council. The Core Competencies detail the knowledge and skills that early childhood professionals should possess to be successful in their careers. As professionals advance on the Career Pathway, the expectation is that their level of practice improves, as well. Thus, Career Pathway levels are aligned with corresponding categories of competencies: beginner competencies, intermediate competencies, or advanced competencies.

The Career Pathway and the Core Competencies are key components of the new TECPDS, an exciting network of resources, professional registries, and other important tools for early childhood professionals in Texas. To learn more about TECPDS or to access the *Texas Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners and Administrators*, visit the TECPDS website: <https://tecpds.org>.

The following pages contain descriptions of the various uses of the Career Pathway; the Career Pathway itself with instructions for use, and important notes on the Career Pathway. If you have any questions or need support with using or implementing the Career Pathway, please contact the TECPDS support team at: <https://tecpds.org/help>



Whether the Career Pathway is used at the program level, the individual level, or the professional development system level, there are benefits for all involved. Although the Career Pathway cannot guarantee the effectiveness of professionals in the workplace, it can establish a common baseline of expectation for continuous improvement to guide better professional planning at the practitioner and administrative level. The tool is intended to be voluntary, but the Texas Early Learning Council hopes that adoption will be widespread.

The Texas Early Learning Council envisions the Career Pathway as a tool to be utilized in three ways:

- A framework to evaluate progress in career development
- A guide for professional development goals
- A way to assess and chart the progress of professionals registered with the Texas Workforce Registry

Using the Career Pathway...

As a Framework to Evaluate Progress in Career Development

The Career Pathway identifies a common framework through which professionals can evaluate their progress on career goals.

A common challenge in the early childhood field is the retention of employees. The Career Pathway can assist employees identify the steps they can take to seek higher pay scales and promotions, while offering administrators a clear framework with which to make compensation and promotion decisions.

The Career Pathway will also promote the accumulation of important and effective ongoing training. The requirements for these training hours are tied to the *Texas Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners and Administrators*. The Core Competencies are statements of skills and knowledge that early childhood professionals should know and be able to demonstrate to be successful in their career. As the Career Pathway indicates, professionals are expected to be able to demonstrate different levels of competencies at different stages in their career development.

How can practitioners and administrators use the Career Pathway to evaluate career development progress for themselves and their staff?

- Practitioners can use the Career Pathway to examine their movement up the levels and consider what steps they can take to increase their value in the marketplace.
- Practitioners can also use the Career Pathway to help inform their decisions related to seeking increased compensation or increased levels of responsibility in their place of employment.
- Administrators can use the Career Pathway as a tool to guide compensation and promotion decisions in their programs.

Using the Career Pathway...

As a Guide for Professional Development Goals

The Career Pathway offers a clear and simple way to measure one's goals. When both practitioners and administrators set goals for the professional development, the entire organization becomes more invested in ongoing quality improvement, which ideally will lead to improved outcomes for the children they serve.

How can practitioners and administrators use the Career Pathway as a guide for setting professional development goals for themselves and their staff?

- An entry level practitioner might examine the Career Pathway and set a personal goal of reaching level 2 in less than a year, and perhaps level 5 in the next 3 years.
- An administrator might use the Career Pathway to set a goal of having 50% of the program staff at level 5 in the next 3 years.

Using the Career Pathway...

As a Way to Assess and Chart the Progress of Professionals Registered With the Texas Workforce Registry

The Career Pathway will serve as a tool to help evaluate and chart the progress of professionals registered with the Texas Workforce Registry, a component of the TECPDS. When professionals register with the Texas Workforce Registry, they will be asked to enter information into the system to create a personal Professional Development Profile, including their work history, education, and annual professional development hours. Using this information, the Texas Workforce Registry will be able to determine a professional's Career Pathway level, which will be recorded in their Professional Development Profile. The Workforce Registry will allow professionals to share their profile and Career Pathway level with their current employers.

How can practitioners and administrators registered with the Texas Workforce Registry use the Career Pathway to assess and chart the professional development progress of themselves and their staff?

- Practitioners and administrators can determine their Career Pathway level based in the information collected on the Professional Development Profile in the Texas Workforce Registry.
- Administrators can utilize the reporting features of the Texas Workforce Registry to easily determine Career Pathway levels of their staff.

Texas Early Childhood Career Pathway for Practitioners and Administrators

EDUCATION	ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	EXPERIENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD			Levels of Practice
		No Experience	1 Year of Full-Time Experience	3 Years or More of Full-Time Experience	
Highest Certification or Degree Awarded	Number of Professional Development Hours Completed in the Past 12 Months				
High School Diploma or Equivalent	24 Hours	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Beginner Levels
High School Diploma or Equivalent AND AT LEAST 3 Credit Hours Related to Early Childhood	24 Hours	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	
Child Development Associate (CDA), Current and Valid	24 Hours	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Intermediate Levels
Early Childhood Technical Certificate WITH One-Year Certificate	24 Hours	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	
Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education or Related Field* WITH AT LEAST 12 Credit Hours Related to Early Childhood	30 Hours	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Advanced Levels
Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education or a Related Field* WITH AT LEAST 12 Credit Hours Related to Early Childhood	30 Hours	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	
Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education or a Related Field* WITH AT LEAST 12 Credit Hours Related to Early Childhood	30 Hours	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	
Doctoral Degree in Early Childhood Education or a Related Field* WITH AT LEAST 12 Credit Hours Related to Early Childhood	30 Hours	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	

Note: To achieve and maintain any career pathway level, all education, professional development, and experience requirements must be met. See the Footnotes on Page 6 for definitions and more information.

How to Determine Your Career Pathway Level

Step 1
In the **EDUCATION** column, locate the highest certification or degree you have obtained.

Step 2
In the **ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** column, make certain you have completed the required number of annual professional development hours within the past 12 months.

Step 3
In the **EXPERIENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD** column, locate your highest level of full-time experience.

Levels of Practice
The Levels of Practice Column indicates the expected level of competency you should be able to demonstrate at your Career Pathway level.

Step 4
Find the intersection of your education, annual professional development, and experience, and **YOU HAVE FOUND YOUR LEVEL ON THE CAREER PATHWAY!**

Levels of Practice	EXPERIENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD			ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	EDUCATION
	No Experience	1 Year of Full-Time Experience	3 Years or More of Full-Time Experience		
Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	24 Hours	High School Diploma or Equivalent
Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	24 Hours	High School Diploma or Equivalent AND AT LEAST 3 Credit Hours Related to Early Childhood
Level 2	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	24 Hours	Child Development Associate (CDA), <i>Current and Valid</i>
Level 3	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	24 Hours	Early Childhood Technical Certificate WITH One-Year Certificate
Level 4	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	30 Hours	Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education or a Related Field* WITH AT LEAST 12 Credit Hours Related to Early Childhood
Level 5	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	30 Hours	Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education or a Related Field* WITH AT LEAST 12 Credit Hours Related to Early Childhood
Level 6	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	30 Hours	Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education or a Related Field* WITH AT LEAST 12 Credit Hours Related to Early Childhood
Level 7	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	30 Hours	Doctoral Degree in Early Childhood Education or a Related Field* WITH AT LEAST 12 Credit Hours Related to Early Childhood

Footnotes:

Placement on the Career Pathway is voluntary and level determination is verified by Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS) staff through a review of the copies of certificates, diplomas and/or original transcripts provided through the Texas Workforce Registry. Employment history is verified by Center Administrators.

*Related fields include, but are not necessarily limited to: Human Development, Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, Education, Nursing, Public Health, Home Economics/Family and Consumer Science, Recreation, Human Ecology, Child and Family Studies, and Business.

Professional development must cover Core Competency Areas as listed in the *Texas Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners and Administrators*:

Texas Core Competencies for Early Childhood for Practitioners and Administrators	
For Practitioners	For Administrators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Growth and Development • Responsive Interactions and Guidance • Learning Environments, Planning Framework, Curriculum, and Standards • Supporting Skill Development • Observation and Assessment • Diversity and Dual Language Learners • Family and Community Relationships • Health, Safety, and Nutrition • Professionalism and Ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing and Maintaining an Effective Organization • Business and Operations Management • Human Resource Leadership and Development • Maintaining a Healthy and Safe Environment • Implementing a Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum and Environment • Instituting Family and Community-Centered Programming

For a complete description, visit <https://tecpds.org>.

Professional development must be provided by a person who meets certain criteria, as applicable.

For child care professionals, professional development must be provided by a person who meets one of the following conditions:

- Is currently listed on the Texas Trainer Registry within the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (previously known as the Texas Early Care and Education Career Development System), maintained by the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office;
- Is an instructor at a public or private secondary school or at a public or private institution of higher education who teaches early childhood development or another relevant course, as determined by rules adopted by the commissioner of education and the commissioner of higher education;
- Is an employee of a state agency with relevant expertise (such as Child Care Licensing, Department of Agriculture, Department of State Health Services);
- Is a physician, psychologist, licensed professional counselor, social worker, or registered nurse;
- Holds a generally recognized credential or possesses documented knowledge relevant to the training the person will provide (such as an individual who has a current Child Care Professional credential, a firefighter who offers training on fire safety, a county health employee who offers training on immunizations);
- Is a registered family home care provider or director of a day-care center or group day-care home in good standing with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), if applicable, and who:
 - Has demonstrated core knowledge in child development and caregiving; and
 - Is only providing training at the home or center in which the provider or director and the person receiving training are employed;
- Has at least two years of experience working in child development, a child development program, early childhood education, a childhood education program, or a Head Start or Early Head Start program and:
 - Has a current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential; or
 - Holds at least an associate's degree in child development, early childhood education, or a related field.

For public school employees, professional development must be provided by an organization that meets the following condition:

- Is an entity approved by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) to deliver educator preparation programs.

Experience refers to full-time work directly with children in a regulated early childhood setting (i.e. Head Start/Early Head Start, ECI, Public School Pre-k-3rd, Licensed/Registered Child Care Centers or Homes).