

# Guide to the California Early Learning Career Lattice

## CALIFORNIA EARLY LEARNING CAREER LATTICE

### What is the California Early Learning Career Lattice (Career Lattice)?

The Career Lattice defines a progression of roles and the training and education necessary to demonstrate competence in a wide variety of positions in early learning. It identifies a common framework through which professionals can evaluate their progress on career goals. The Career Lattice can also be used by employers, professional development programs, researchers, and policy makers to assess and chart the progress of professionals. Whether the Career Lattice is used at the program level, the individual level, or the professional development system level, there are benefits for all involved. Although the Career Lattice cannot guarantee the effectiveness of professionals in the workplace, it can establish a common baseline of educational preparation to guide professional and career planning.

The Career Lattice can be used throughout the early learning system for the full spectrum of professional opportunities currently available by:

- Defining the training, qualifications, and certification/credentials that early childhood educators should have and be able to demonstrate at various levels of professional responsibility;
- Outlining a pathway for professional advancement and achievement from someone just entering the field, whether that individual is a classroom aide, teacher, or multi-site program director; and
- Identifying the basic educational benchmarks early educators need in order to move into positions that support early education and other early educators including coaches, trainers, higher education faculty, or infrastructure support.

### Key Facts about California's Career Lattice

1. The Career Lattice is a guide to help early educators think about their career path and professional development.
2. The Career Lattice does not change any of the existing regulations or licensing requirements for working in infant/toddler care, a child care center, a preschool, Transitional Kindergarten (TK)-3rd grade, or a family child care home, or being a home visitor. The launch of California's Career Lattice will not affect the current work of those working in Early Learning in any way.

3. The Career Lattice is designed to encompass a variety of positions within early learning:
  - Administrators, teachers, assistants or aides, family, friend, and neighbor providers (FFNs), and volunteers.
  - Coaches, mentors, or other quality improvement or technical assistance staff;
  - Community program managers who coordinate support program such as the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), stipend programs, or programs that increase access to child care programs;
  - Higher education faculty,
  - Non-unit-bearing professional development trainers and providers; and
  - Researchers and public policy staff.
4. The Career Lattice will be integrated in California's professional development system and represents the new statewide standard for measuring early educators' educational qualifications.

## Why California Needs a Career Lattice

Growing national attention to the importance of early childhood education as it relates to a child's future success has brought renewed focus on the education, skills, and competencies of the adults who work daily with young children in group settings. The increased attention and funding for early education programs has led to a growth of professional and career options for early educators. In addition, the growth in quality improvement initiatives, training programs, and other professional development supports has led to an expanding need to understand the qualifications of members of the workforce who provide services to teaching staff, such as QRIS administrators, higher education faculty, coaches, and trainers.

Over the past decade, California has made significant advancements in developing a comprehensive professional development system with the creation of the California Early Care and Education Workforce Registry and QRIS. Currently, there are statewide efforts underway to establish adult learning and coaching competencies as well as coach and trainer certifications systems, and a training approval process. All of these efforts need a single Career Lattice that will serve as a unifying framework to better understand, track, and research the qualifications of professionals working within these systems and in early education programs.

# UNDERSTANDING CAREER LATTICE LEVELS

## Career Lattice Levels

The Career Lattice has 10 levels. The Career Lattice expands to include additional options for levels 5 – 10. These options represent a variety of positions a person may want to pursue:

- Early Learning Caregiver/Teacher/TK-3rd grade Teacher (teacher, family child care provider, assistant)
- Early Learning Administrator/School Administrator (ex. program director, principal)
- Early Learning Specialist/Innovator (ex. Coach, trainer, mentor)
- Early Learning Infrastructure Support Person (ex. Staff who work at a Resource and Referral Agency, County Office of Education, or First 5 Commission)

### *Level 1*

An entry level established for people just entering the early education field. It is an entry point for people who are working in FFN care, working towards becoming a family child care provider, or as a volunteer or aide in a child care setting under the supervision of a teacher. People interested in meeting the requirement for this level should contact their local Resource and Referral (R&R) agency.

### *Levels 2 through 6*

Levels that start with training and gradually add college-level coursework leading to the Associate degree. These levels are for teaching staff working directly with children in a child care setting. At Level 4B there is the option of being a Center Director in a Title 22<sup>1</sup> licensed child care center. While progressing through these levels it is very important to complete general education courses if you plan to pursue a college degree.

### *Level 7*

The Associate degree level. This level applies to staff working directly with children as well, but also represents a milestone when teaching staff and administrators can start considering working for a local agency that supports the ECE field, such as; Resource and Referral Agency (R&R), County Office of Education, or county First 5 Commission. It is at this level that a person could also work as a supervisor in a Title 5<sup>2</sup> program if they

---

<sup>1</sup> **Title 22** In early education, when you hear the term “Title 22”, it is referring California’s Health and Safety regulations. This is where child care licensing regulations that implement California’s Health and Safety code (law). Title 22 establishes the requirements to operate a child care center or family child care home and sets the minimum training and educational requirements staff working in these programs must meet. State licensing regulations are different for family child homes and child care centers.

<sup>2</sup> **Title 5** Any child care program that receives child care services funds (subsidies) from the State Department of Education must adhere to Education regulations found in Title 5 which implements California Education Code law. These regulations include staff education requirements that are higher than state licensing regulations (Title 22 Health & Safety). Early educators who work in these programs

have completed additional courses in administration and adult supervision and meet certain experience requirements. **[NOTE: Work experience is not included as part of the Career Lattice.]**

### *Level 8*

The Bachelor's degree level. Once a person has completed their Bachelor's degree, there are a wide variety of options they may choose to pursue within the early learning field:

- Early learning teaching staff or administrator in a preschool, child care, or family child care program
- Transitional Kindergarten (TK) – Third Grade teacher
- Early learning coach or quality improvement specialist
- Early learning trainer
- Staff at local agency such as: R&R, County Office of Education, or First 5 Commission
- California Department of Education or California Department of Social Services

Some of these options will require additional training, certification or credentialing.

### *Level 9*

The Master's degree levels. In addition to the types of positions listed under Level 8 above, people who have completed a Master's degree may consider becoming:

- Community College Faculty
- Researcher
- Policy analyst

### *Level 10*

The Doctorate level. In addition to the types of positions listed in the previous levels, a Doctorate opens up the possibility to become a faculty member at a college or university in both baccalaureate and graduate studies programs.

---

must possess a Child Development Permit issued by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PURSUING A COLLEGE DEGREE

- If you plan to pursue a college degree at any level (Associate, Bachelor's, Master's or Doctorate), it is very important that you receive expert guidance on the courses you should take. You should connect with the early education or child development department at your college to identify who at the college can provide you with the best guidance.
- If you plan to work with a special population or age group of children, you should consult with your college about specialization courses or credential prerequisites that would be appropriate for you to take. For example:
  - If you want to work with infants or toddlers, you can take courses specific to this age group.  
If you want to specialize in working with children with special needs or dual language learners, there are courses that prepare you for working with these children.
- Completing General Education (GE) courses is required in the Associate and Bachelor's degree program. It is important you meet with a college counselor to understand your GE requirements. This is especially true if you plan to transfer to a college or university from a community college to help determine your pathway for completing GE courses.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *How does the Career Lattice relate to the Child Development Permit?*

California's existing early childhood certification system, the Child Development Permit Matrix, was established through regulation in 1997, and replaced the Children's Center Permit, which was the required certification for teachers in state-funded programs. The Career Lattice expands on the existing permit matrix by recognizing entry and advanced levels of education for a wider range of career opportunities. It does **not** replace the Permit Matrix.

### *Does the Career Lattice have work experience requirements?*

No, the current Career Lattice does not have any work experience requirements. Career Lattice levels are based solely on an individual's completed education and training. Work experience was not included as a requirement because under California's existing system it would be too difficult to determine and verify an individual's work experience.

### *Is the Career Lattice tied to the California Early Childhood Educator Competencies?*

Currently, the Career Lattice does not have a direct connection to California Early Childhood Educator Competencies. California does have a goal to develop a competencies-based system to determine early educators' skills and abilities for those at levels that do not require a California Teaching Credential. At this time, however, California does not have a system in place to observe, measure, and verify an early educator competencies across an array of professional opportunities in the Career Lattice. California is working on efforts to support the alignment of the competencies to college coursework and non-unit-bearing professional development and training,

improve course and competencies articulation among colleges, and improve the transfer process from community colleges to other colleges and universities:

- The California Early Childhood Curriculum Alignment Project at [https://www.childdevelopment.org/cs/cdtc/print/htdocs/services\\_cap.htm](https://www.childdevelopment.org/cs/cdtc/print/htdocs/services_cap.htm) supports transfer and curriculum consistency in the foundational, specialization, and supervision and administration preparation of early childhood education students.
- The ECE Competencies Mapping Tool at <https://www.childdevelopment.org/cs/cip/print/htdocs/mt/home.htm> provides a way for faculty and professional development providers to determine where and to what extent courses, academic program and trainings align with California's ECE Competencies.

### ***What is the California ECE Workforce Registry and how does the Career Lattice relate to it?***

The California ECE Workforce Registry is a state, regional, and local collaboration designed to track and promote the education, training, and experience of the early care and education workforce for the purpose of improving professionalism and workforce quality to positively impact children. When you set up a Registry account and submit your coursework and training information it will calculate your level on the Career Lattice. To learn more, visit the ECE Workforce Registry website at <https://caregistry.org>.

### ***Do all coaches and trainers need to have at least a Bachelor's Degree?***

No, these decisions have not been made. There is work underway to develop a training and coaching certification system in California. The Career Lattice will be periodically updated to reflect agreed-upon requirements once this system has been developed. At this point, having a bachelor's degree is only a guide for coaches and trainers.

### ***Can this lattice be used for Family Child Care Home providers?***

Yes, the Career Lattice is meant for all types of early learning professionals. The Career Lattice only identifies the minimum qualifications for a family child care home provider. These providers have a wide range of educational qualifications including an Associate, bachelors, masters or doctoral degree. Many family child care home providers also choose to serve in other roles in the field, such as: mentor, coach, trainer, or college instructor.

## RESOURCES

### Child Development Training Consortium (CDTC)

CDTC provides services, training, technical assistance, and resources to students and professionals working with and for children. The Child Development Training Consortium (CDTC) is a statewide program funded by the California Department of Education, Early Education and Support Division (CDE/EESD) with federal Child Care and Development Quality Improvement funds. The program is administered by the Yosemite Community College District and serves all of California. Since 2002-2003, the CDTC has also received funding from First 5 California. Here is a list of CDTC services that may support you in your professional development:

**ECE Student Career and Education Program:** This program is available to fund specific educational costs at 105 community colleges throughout California. Access to this program is available through the CDTC Campus Coordinator designated at each of the colleges. For more information, click on the ECE Student Career and Education Program link at [https://www.childdevelopment.org/cs/cdte/print/htdocs/services\\_cc.htm](https://www.childdevelopment.org/cs/cdte/print/htdocs/services_cc.htm) ([English flier](#)) or call (209) 548-5726 .

**Child Development Permit Stipends:** The CDTC pays the permit application processing fees to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing for eligible Child Development Permit applicants (see more information by clicking on link above). For more information, click on the Child Development Permit Stipends link at <https://www.childdevelopment.org/students-workforce/applications/child-development-permit-stipends> ([English flier](#)) or call (209) 548-5726. Permits are funded by CDSS.

#### *Additional resources from CDTC:*

- **Help finding an ECE contact at a community college** – CDTC Find a College at [https://www.childdevelopment.org/cs/cdte/print/htdocs/services\\_cc\\_findcollege.htm](https://www.childdevelopment.org/cs/cdte/print/htdocs/services_cc_findcollege.htm)

### California Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Competencies

The California Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Competencies at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/ececompetencies2011.pdf> describe the knowledge, skills and dispositions that early childhood educators need in order to provide high quality care and education to young children and their families. Visit the ECE Competencies web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/ececomps.asp> to watch videos about the 12 competency areas.

**Competencies Self-Assessment Toolkit:** CompSAT is *the* companion to the CA ECE Competencies. CompSAT guides early educators through a process of self-reflection and authentic assessment in the 12 competency areas detailed in the ECE Competencies. CompSAT information is available at <https://cacompsat.org/>.



## Resource and Referral Agencies

Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) agencies are located in every county in California. Over the last four decades, R&R services have evolved from a grassroots effort to help parents find child care, to a well-developed system that supports parents, providers, and local communities in finding, planning for, and providing affordable, quality child care. In addition to the numerous services R&Rs provide to families, they support early learning professionals through:

- Maintaining comprehensive databases of child care providers in their communities, including licensed family child care homes and child care centers;
- Working with providers to improve the quality of child care and to maintain and expand the supply of child care in each county;
- Providing training and other services that help providers stay in business;
- Compiling and disseminate information on the statewide supply and demand for child care; and
- Educating local communities and leaders to understand child care issues and to plan effectively to address child care needs.

It is recommended you connect with your local R&R to understand the services and training they provide. R&Rs are particularly helpful for people just entering the early learning field and have numerous resources and training to support people interested in opening their own family child care home. To find a R&R in your county, visit the R&R Network Member directory at [https://rrnetwork.org/assets/general-files/Member-Directory-6\\_23.pdf](https://rrnetwork.org/assets/general-files/Member-Directory-6_23.pdf) or call 1.800.KIDS.793.

## Local Child Care Planning Councils (LPC)

The primary mission of the LPCs is to plan for child care and development services based on the needs of families in the local community. LPCs are intended to serve as a forum to address the child care needs of all families in the community for all types of child care, both subsidized and non-subsidized. Visit the LPC Contact web page at <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-care-and-development/quality-improvement-initiatives/local-child-care-and-development-planning-councils> for LPCs currently representing each county in California.

LPCs also coordinate the Transitional Kindergarten Professional Development Reimbursement Program. The TK Professional Development Reimbursement Program is a professional development program that provides reimbursement to qualified TK educators and state preschool teachers who complete certain professional development activities.

## Local County Office of Education (or Office of the County Superintendent of Schools)

Each county in California has a county office of education (COE). COEs offer a variety of technical assistance and support services to early learning professionals including professional learning, training, and administrative support. COEs also often operate regional early learning support programs, such as a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) aligned with Quality Counts California, the California Preschool Instructional Network, and Child Care Local



Planning Councils (LPCs). They may partner with or house other early learning organizations, such as the local First 5 or Resource and Referral (R&R) agency.

In addition, County Superintendents operate intermediate service agencies providing direct and regional support to school districts, and serve as the primary implementation arm of the California Department of Education (CDE). Current responsibilities include the following categories:

- Educating specific student populations;
- Reviewing school district Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) and ensuring alignment of projected spending, services, and goals;
- Providing technical assistance to school districts; and
- Implementing regional support activities to assist district and school staffs.

Find the COE in your community at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/schooldirectory/county-offices-of-education>.

## Quality Counts California

Quality Counts California is a statewide system of locally-implemented quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS), which helps to connect parents and families to high-quality early learning and care programs, and ensures that infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children have quality early learning experiences in their local communities. Quality Counts California also provides resources and support to early learning and care providers so they can create nourishing and effective early learning and care programs that will help children to grow and thrive. Rated elements include teacher, family child care provider, and director qualifications.

## Quality Counts CA Website

The Quality Counts California website at <http://qualitycountscalifornia.net/> has developed a website focused on providing local resources and supports to California's parents, families, and early learning and care providers while connecting policymakers to the importance of the California's QRIS and quality early learning and care experiences.

### **Quality Counts California Continuous Quality Improvement Pathways**

This tool is intended to be used by coaches, technical assistance providers, and program administration to help determine appropriate professional development opportunities for early care and education program staff in conjunction with the site's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The elements in this tool have become part of the participating program's quality improvement plan and the consortia's continuous program improvement process.

California Department of Education  
August 2018