



Vermont Association for the
Education of Young Children



An Affiliate
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S.206 Early Childhood Educator Profession Bill

March 11, 2026

Session Description

The ECE Profession Bill (S.206), which would establish professional recognition for early childhood educators, is working its way through the Legislature. This session provides essential background for early childhood educators who are curious about or just learning about this bill. Participants will learn about the field-led initiative that started the conversation, how educator voices have influenced the bill and can continue to inform the process, and why professional recognition benefits early childhood educators, children, and families.

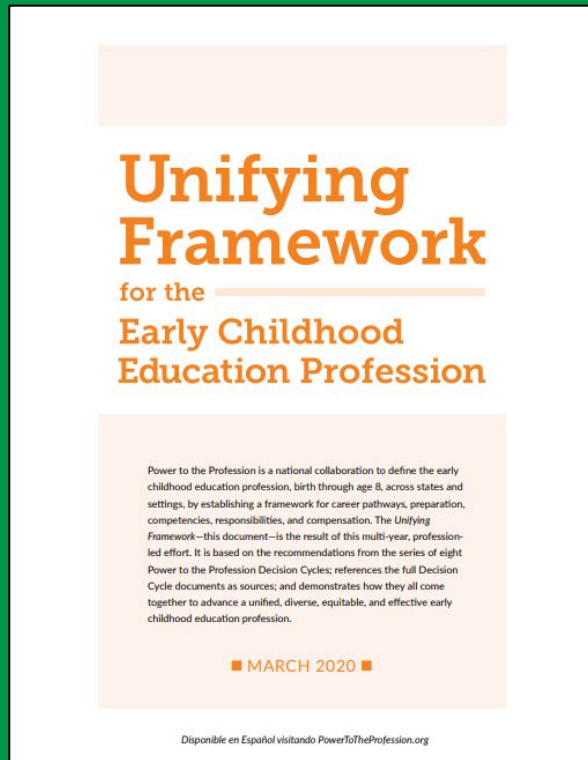


Vermont Association for the
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Start With the System

The Audacious Vision for the
ECE Profession of Tomorrow:

Each and every child, beginning at birth, has the opportunity to benefit from high-quality, affordable early childhood education, delivered by an effective, diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated workforce.



Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession

Power to the Profession is a national collaboration to define the early childhood education profession, birth through age 8, across states and settings, by establishing a framework for career pathways, preparation, competencies, responsibilities, and compensation. The *Unifying Framework*—this document—is the result of this multi-year, professional effort. It is based on the recommendations from the series of eight Power to the Profession Decision Cycles; references the full Decision Cycle documents as sources; and demonstrates how they all come together to advance a unified, diverse, equitable, and effective early childhood education profession.

■ MARCH 2020 ■

Disponible en Español visitando [PowerToTheProfession.org](https://www.powertotheprofession.org)

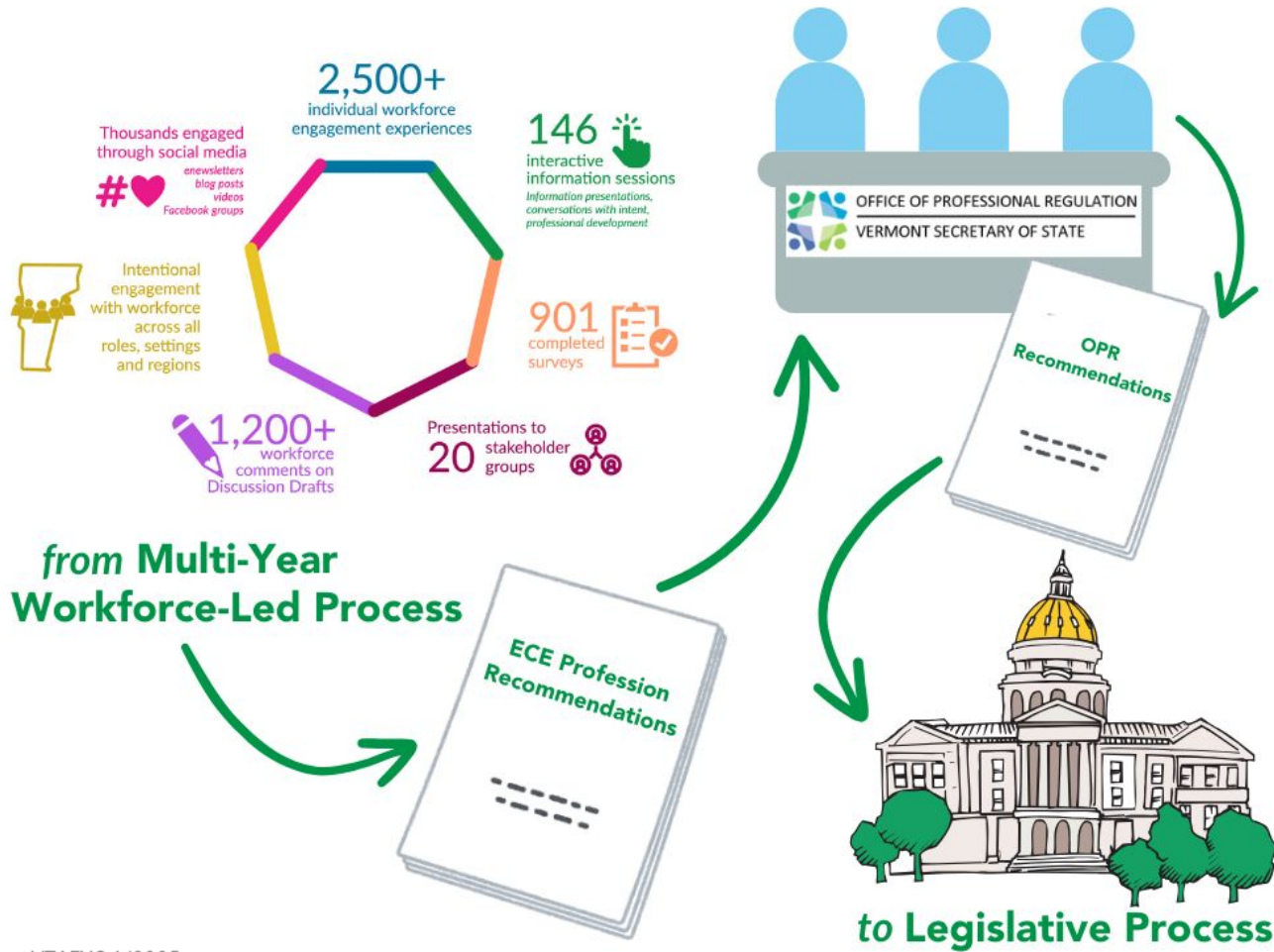
Recognition for the ECE Profession

Why recognition matters:

- Professional identity
- Clear career pathways
- Consistent qualifications across settings
- Compensation to increase with qualifications

This is only possible because of:

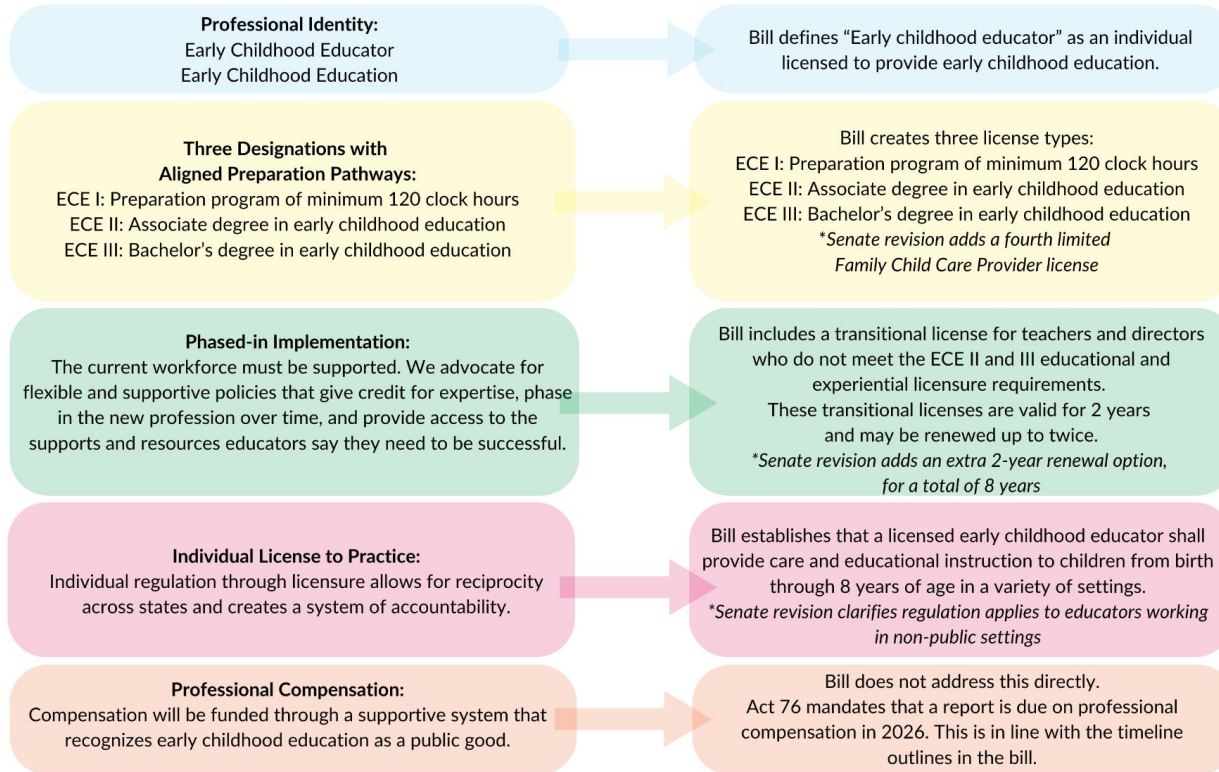
- Years of workforce-led discussion and consensus
- Robust supports and a phased-in timeline to meet qualifications



How Does The ECE Profession Bill Align With Our Recommendations?

Vermont Workforce Recommendations

Bill Language



Caregivers For Young Children 0 – 5

Trusted Caregiver

Family member,
neighbor, friend, nanny



Individual Regulation:
None

Program Regulation:
None. May serve a
maximum of 3 families,
including caregiver's own

Child Ages:
0+

Hours Served:
Varies

Public Funding Source:
In certain cases, eligible for
child care tuition assistance
payments

Early Childhood Educator

Home-Based



Individual Regulation:
None. Proposed through
ECE Profession Bill

Program Regulation:
CDD

Child Ages:
6 Weeks – 5 Years

Hours Served:
Full time +

Public Funding Source:
Eligible for child care
tuition assistance payments

Center-Based



Individual Regulation:
None. Proposed through
ECE Profession Bill

Program Regulation:
CDD

Child Ages:
6 Weeks – 5 Years

Hours Served:
Full time +

Public Funding Source:
Eligible for child care
tuition assistance payments

Early Childhood Educator

Public School-Based



Individual Regulation:
AOE Educator License

Program Regulation:
AOE and CDD

Child Ages:
3 – 5 Years

Hours Served:
10+ hours/week

Public Funding Source:
Public education funding

The ECE Profession Bill would create licensure through Vermont's Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) for early childhood educators in home- and center-based programs. Approximately 6,500 Vermont early childhood educators work in these settings.



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Current Challenges

Children and Families

- Suboptimal outcomes for children - turnover, inconsistent quality
- Lack of transparency, unclear qualifications
- Lack of individual accountability - no recourse, unless criminal charge - risk of harm

General Public

- Diminished outcomes
- Economic harm

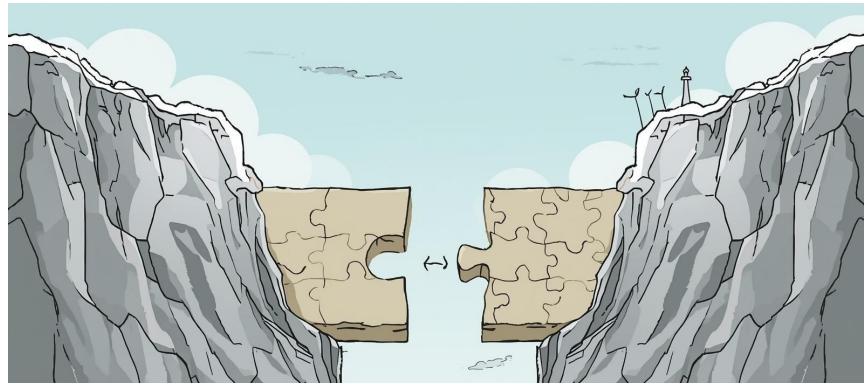
ECE Workforce

- Financial harm - compensation, lack of benefits
- Personal harm - burnout, diminished well-being
- Career pathways - lack of standardized, transferable, stackable credits

Gap in the Existing System

The Office of Professional Regulation is required to answer: *Why isn't the public protected from unprofessional practitioners through means other than regulation?*

- The answer: “Between the minimal protection of a background check to the extreme measure of criminal prosecution for law-breaking behavior, there is a vast middle ground for potentially unprofessional, unethical, and/or harmful behavior for which there is no fair and equitable mechanism to address.



Benefits of a Regulated Profession

Children and Families

- Improved outcomes for children - continuity, quality
- Increased equity - accessible, quality
- Individual accountability - diverse, well-prepared

General Public

- Businesses - now, future workforce
- Attracting young families to Vermont

ECE Workforce

- COmpensation commensurate with qualifications
- Standardized, transferable, stackable credits

Administrators of ECE system - accessible, transferable, individual data

The ECE Profession Bill

- Establishes Early Childhood Education as a regulated profession in Vermont
- Based on recommendations from **Office of Professional Regulation (OPR)**
- At the workforce, state, and national levels, the recommendations for an early childhood education profession are aligned and consistent



Legislation

“Who and what is being regulated?”

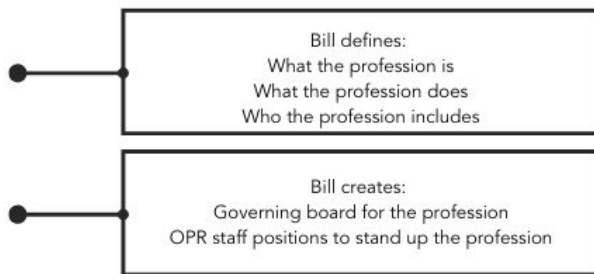
vs.

Rulemaking

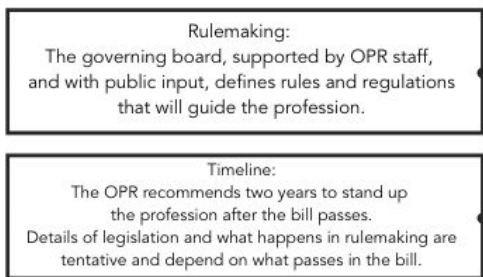
“How are regulations applied in practice?”



The profession is created **through legislation.**



The profession's rules and regulations are defined **through rulemaking.**



Proposed ECE License Designations

as recommended by national Commission on Professional Excellence in ECE /
Vermont Workforce / Vermont Office of Professional Regulation

ECE III License

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Education Requirement:

Bachelor's degree in ECE *or* initial master's degree in ECE

Scope of Practice:

Lead educator in *birth-age 8* settings

ECE II License

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Education Requirement:

Associate degree in ECE

Scope of Practice:

Lead educator in *birth-age 5* settings

ECE I License

\$

Education Requirement:

At least 120 hours of an ECE preparation program

Scope of Practice:

Support role in *birth-age 8* settings

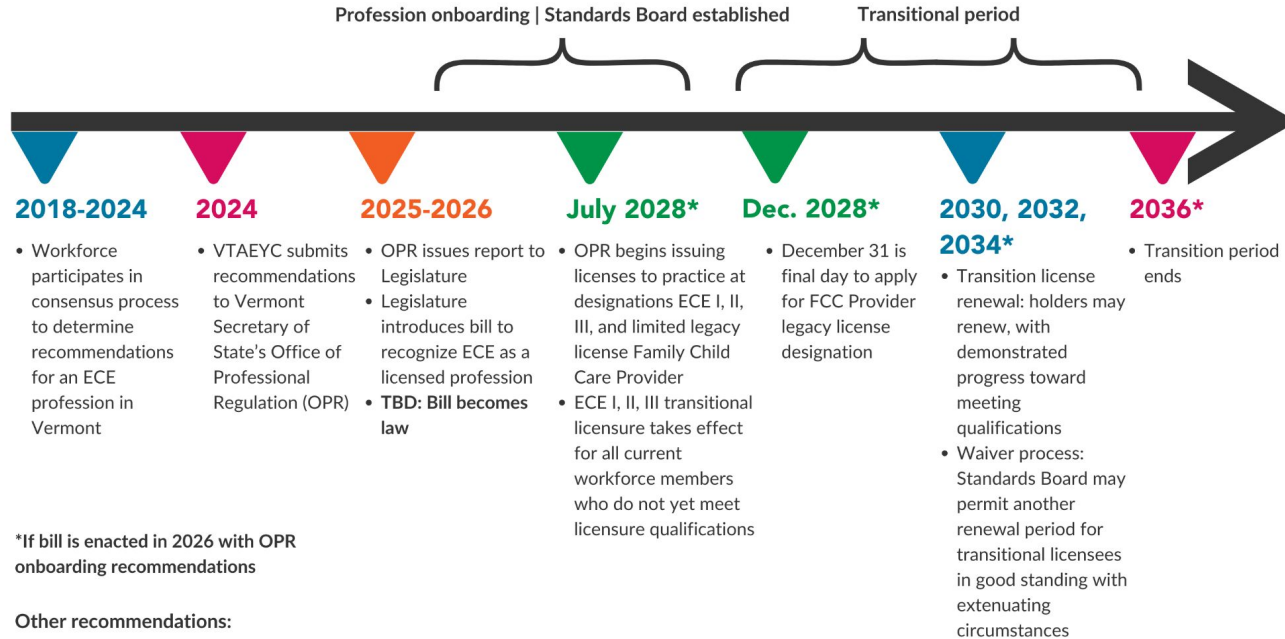
Adapted from the *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession*



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Implementation Timeline for Professional ECE Licensure

Revised according to bill passed by Vermont Senate in 2025



2025 - ECE Profession Bill

- Senate passed the ECE Profession language as part the big OPR Bill. (OPR has a bill every year.)
- Senate bill had amendments added by the Senate Committee on Government Operations.
- New professions are rarely established in one session.
- This is cause for celebration!



2026 - Looking ahead to ECE Profession Bill



- The House has committed to taking up an ECE Profession Bill this session.
- The bill passed out of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee with a unanimous vote of 5-0 in February. The committee had made a couple of amendments, including adding transition supports for lead teachers.
- Steep learning curve about a very complex system
- No guarantees
- OPR leads
- VTAEYC supports, as it did in 2025

Talking Points for Legislators

The Early Childhood Educator Profession Bill, and the recommendations of the Vermont Secretary of State's Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) stem from workforce recommendations generated through our Advancing ECE as a Recognized Profession workforce outreach project, which started nearly 10 years ago and engaged more than 1,000 early childhood educators. Through workforce outreach, legislation, and eventually rulemaking and governance, centering early childhood educators' voices is critical.

Talking Points for Legislators

Licensure ensures every child receives high-quality care and education.

Children in all types of programs deserve educators who meet clear, consistent standards for preparation and practice.

Professional recognition for early childhood educators in non-public programs fills gaps in our current system, means more children will have access to child care and families can go to work, and ensures all children have the opportunity to benefit from high-quality early experiences to best prepare them for school and lifelong learning.

Individual regulation in early childhood education means families gain peace of mind and trust.

Licensure offers transparency and accountability, so families know their child's educator is qualified, ethical, and supported by a system that values high standards.

Talking Points for Legislators

The ECE Profession Bill honors and supports the existing workforce. The bill ensures no current early childhood educator is pushed out. It aligns with the recommendations of Vermont's ECE workforce, as well as recommendations from the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) and the national Commission on Professional Excellence in Early Childhood Education. It takes into account the investments Vermont has already made to retain and recruit its early childhood education workforce, and to help early childhood educators increase their qualifications with low or no debt. Additional workforce advocacy led to retention provisions that value experience.

Talking Points for Legislators

This bill is part of the foundation of a portable, respected national profession. Vermont is among a cohort of states leading the way toward a future where early childhood education is a licensed, portable profession. This opens doors for educators, improves hiring, attracts educators, families, and workers to Vermont, and raises the field's status nationwide.

The Ask



- **Senators** Thank members of the Senate Health & Welfare Committee and democratic members of Senate Finance for passing S.206 and ask all senators to do the same.
- **Representatives** Encourage members of the House to take up the bill quickly so that it can be passed by the full Legislature this year.

Ways to Stay Informed, Get Involved

- Subscribe to receive VTAEYC Updates
- Complete the Leadership and Advocacy Interest Survey
(and pick up a #ProudToBeAnECE t-shirt at the VTAEYC table!)
- Contact Beth at beth.wallace@vtaeyc.org to request presentations,
make connections
- Request a #ProudToBeAnECE Yard Sign!





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Why NOW is the Time to Pursue ECE as a Profession

VT ECE Youth Apprenticeship Program

Your work can be play!

- ★ Early childhood education is a rewarding career in a field with high demand.
- ★ High-school students, in career and technical centers, interested in a career in early childhood education have a unique opportunity to participate in the VT ECE Youth Apprenticeship Program.
- ★ The Youth Apprenticeship Program pairs classroom-based learning and CCV credit-bearing academic education with on-the-job experiential learning in a community early childhood education setting.



VT ECE Apprenticeship Program

Get the support you need to succeed.

- VTAEYC and the VT Department of Labor collaborate to offer the Vermont Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship Program for early childhood educators seeking education and experience in the field.
- Employers who are interested in supporting an apprentice team **match the apprentice with a qualified mentor** who is an educated and experienced employee in their workplace.
- Apprentices build competencies and skills through supervised on-the-job training, complete a specific sequence of **6-7 college courses**, and participate in additional community-based trainings to gain the knowledge and skills needed to work more effectively.



TEACH Early Childhood®Scholarship Models & Program Details



Apprenticeship Model



Associate Degree Model



Bachelor's Degree Model



Licensure Model



Scholarship Benefits

Scholarships cover a portion of tuition, books, paid time off during classes, and includes a stipend to cover related expenses. This Program also awards recipients with a financial bonus upon completion of required credits.



Your Commitment

Recipients must complete 9-15 college credits, commit to remaining at their employer for a minimum of 3 months, and to remain in a registered or licensed early childhood program regulated by the CDD for an additional 9 months after the completion of this contract.



Employer Contributions

Employers sponsor recipients by awarding them an annual raise and/or bonus upon completion of the required credits. Many scholarship models also give employer-sponsored paid time off from work to complete required coursework.

Hot off the press: **Foundation Forward: ECE Scholarship Pilot**

- APL/PLA Course began January 28, 2025
- Supports include:
 - Tuition
 - Mentoring
 - Technology
- Average completer earns 30 credits through APL - that's the equivalent of a full academic year!!
- No accuplacers (testing)
- Summer → Placement in course(s) needed
- Fall → Additional academic planning



Professional Development Grants & Bonuses

Find the support for professional growth.



CDA Assessment Fee Grant

This grant assists registered providers and licensed center staff with the assessment fee to attain the Child Development Associate (CDA).



College Tuition Grant

This grant assists registered providers and licensed center staff with the cost of college courses that relate to working with children and families.



GED Assessment Fee Grant

This grant is for Vermont residents working in a regulated child care program to assist with the cost of taking a GED test(s).



Peer Review Assessment Fee Grant

This grant assists registered providers and licensed center staff with the peer review assessment fee for VT Department of Education licensure.

[View the Grant Requirements](#)

Education GAP Grant for Early Childhood Educators

A bridge for the gap between you and your goals.

- Funded by a generous anonymous donor
- Up to \$1,000 to address a financial barrier to continuing higher education
- Applicants must be working in a CDD-regulated center, family child care home or public preschool program
- Applications are accepted year-round



[View Grant Guidelines](#)

[Apply Today](#)

Student Loan Repayment Assistance Program

Cut down your debt to build up their future.

- ❑ The Student Loan Repayment Assistance Program for Early Childhood Educators provides **up to \$4,000 annually** to reduce the student debt of full-time educators who earned an early childhood related degree.
- ❑ Participants must commit to working in a Vermont regulated program for 12 months. **Payments will be made directly to the individual on a quarterly or one-time basis.**
- ❑ Applications are accepted year-round. **Awards are given on a first-come, first-serve basis and are limited to available grant funds.** We recommend applying as soon as possible to receive the maximum award available.



Professional Recognition through Northern Lights

Step 1: Apply for your credential; Step 2: Receive your bonus!

The screenshot shows the website header with the logo and navigation menu. The main heading is "Early Childhood Career Ladder". Below it, there is a breadcrumb trail: "Home / Career Development / Early Childhood Career Ladder". The main content area describes the ladder as a tool for planning and tracking professional growth. It includes a section for "Apply for a Level Certificate" with three links: "Level Certificate Application (fillable Word document)", "Level Certificate Application (PDF)", and "Guidance Document for Level Certificate Application". There is also a section for "Find Your Path and Stay on Track" and a footer note about contacting a Resource Advisor for support. A sidebar on the right lists "MORE IN THIS SECTION" with links to "Early Childhood Career Ladder", "Afterschool Pathways", "Program Director Credential", "Individual Professional Development Plan", "Competencies & Standards", "Professional Development Tracking (BFIS)", "Certificates, Credentials, & Licensure", and "Higher Education".

The screenshot shows a table titled "Early Childhood Professional Recognition Bonuses". The table lists various professional achievements and their corresponding bonus amounts. The table has two columns: "Professional Achievement, Credential, or Educator Licensure" and "Amount".

Professional Achievement, Credential, or Educator Licensure	Amount
Northern Lights Level 1 Certificate (includes completion of Fundamentals training and one year of experience in regulated care)	\$300
Northern Lights Level 2 Certificate (includes <u>first</u> Child Development Associate [CDA] credential if received within the past two years AND two years of experience in regulated care)	\$1,200
Northern Lights Level 3A Certificate (includes Registered Child Care Apprenticeship Certificate, or Community College of Vermont Childcare Certificate AND two years of experience in regulated care)	\$2,100
Northern Lights Level 3B Certificate (includes an associate degree in a related field AND two years of experience in regulated care)	\$2,400
Northern Lights Level 4A Certificate (includes a bachelor's degree in a <u>related field</u> AND two years of experience in regulated care)	\$3,000
Northern Lights Level 4B Certificate <ul style="list-style-type: none">Meets Level 4A requirements plus holds a Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) educator licensure for first (not provisional or renewal) early childhood educator or early childhood special educator endorsement	\$1,000
Northern Lights Level 5A Certificate (includes a master's degree in a <u>related field</u> AND two years of experience in regulated care)	\$3,500

October 2024

VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CHILD DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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