

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CAREER OPPORTUNITIES + PATHWAYS



Entering the field of **Early Childhood Education** is accessible, affordable, and rewarding. Wherever you start your journey, Career Navigators at Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families are ready to assist you with your goals for a promising career!





CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

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EARLY CHILDHOOD

The foundations for lifelong learning and development are built during the early childhood years. With the brain doubling in size between birth and age five, early childhood educators have the unique opportunity to engage with children during this critical stage of development. A career in early childhood shapes your future – and theirs!

This booklet is designed to outline some of the career opportunities available in the field of Early Childhood Education in Colorado. It includes careers ranging from entry-level positions to those available as your education, skills, and experience grow! *We have included a Glossary on pages 13-15 for certain terms indicated in dark blue that you may want to learn more about. Simply click the bolded word or scan the QR code and you will be directed to external resources!*

CAREER NAVIGATION ASSISTANCE

We are ready to assist you!



Click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code to schedule a free call with a Career Navigator for individualized assistance! You'll be taken to BuildMyECECareer.com, a unique website where you'll learn more and get your journey started!



EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER + TEACHER AIDE

CAREER OVERVIEW

Early Childhood Teachers (ECT)

work directly with children in infant, toddler, preschool, and Pre-K classrooms. They are responsible for establishing and maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment. Teachers and Teacher Aides may work in any licensed early childhood program in Colorado.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Teachers plan and implement high quality learning experiences to advance the development of the children in their care by partnering with families and other classroom staff.

- **Teacher Aides and Assistants** support the teacher in providing the best care and guidance for all children in the classroom.
- **Floater and substitute teachers** are available to provide breaks and time off for the regular classroom teachers.



CAREER PATHWAY

- An ECT may choose to apply for the Early Childhood Professional Credential through the **Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS)**, a system for all Colorado early childhood professionals to document and quantify their professional growth and accomplishments.
- There are other non-degree and degree pathways to becoming an ECT, according to the employer's minimal requirements.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DIRECTOR + ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

CAREER OVERVIEW

Early Childhood Directors and *Assistant Directors* ensure developmentally appropriate experiences for the children, support the needs of teachers and families, and operate the program with sound administrative and fiscal management. They must have the combined skills of a mentor, early childhood educator, human resources manager, and program administrator to operate a high-quality program.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors may:

- Work with a licensing specialist that is assigned to their program from the **Colorado Department of Early Childhood/Division of Early Learning Licensing** and Administration to maintain all licensing requirements.
- Improve program quality by engaging with the **Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)**.

CAREER PATHWAY

Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors that direct small or large programs must meet minimum level requirements through the **Colorado Shines PDIS**.



FAMILY CHILD CARE PROGRAM OWNER

CAREER OVERVIEW

Family Child Care Program Owners, also referred to as **Family Child Care Providers (FCCPs)**, care for and educate young children and infants through school age in their home. They must have a strong foundation in Early Childhood Education as well as solid organization and business management skills. There are multiple types of Family Child Care Home licenses: Family Child Care Home, Infant and Toddler, Three Under Two, Large Child Care Home, and Experienced Child Care Home.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

FCCPs may be required to:

- Maintain a small or large Family Child Care Home license to serve families who prefer a smaller home environment for their children.
- Choose to engage with the **Colorado Shines QRIS** and **PDIS** to maintain and improve their program quality and professional development.

CAREER PATHWAY

As director of their own program, FCCPs must meet minimum-level requirements through the **Colorado Shines PDIS**. There are different requirements for each type of Family Child Care Home license.



EARLY CHILDHOOD COACH

CAREER OVERVIEW

An **Early Childhood Coach** is a professional who works directly with early childhood educators—including Teachers, Directors, and Family Child Care Providers – to build capacity for continuous quality improvement. Coaches may work with individuals and programs through the **Colorado Shines QRIS** or through other approved courses of special recognition, such as **Expanding Quality in Infant and Toddler Care (EQIT)** or **Pyramid Colorado**.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Early Childhood Coaches work with their coaching partner on:

- Joint planning
- Observation and Modeling
- Reflective dialogue
- Feedback
- Sharing analysis of program data
- Collaborative progress monitoring based on individualized goals

CAREER PATHWAY

- The **Colorado Early Childhood Coach Credential** provides statewide recognition to early childhood professionals who have the foundational skills and dispositions necessary for effective coaching in the early childhood field.
- Credentialed coaches participate in department-approved, coaching-specific training and engage in ongoing professional development with a trained reflective supervisor to maintain their coaching credential.



EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAINER

CAREER OVERVIEW

An **Early Childhood Trainer** is a professional who trains all early childhood educators on a range of topics important to the field. Trainers may work with early childhood programs through the **Colorado Shines QRIS** or through other approved courses of special recognition, such as **Expanding Quality in Infant and Toddler Care (EQIT)** or **Pyramid Colorado**.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Early Childhood Trainers are responsible for aligning their training to the domains within the **Colorado Competencies for Early Educators and Professionals** which include:

- Child Growth, Development and Learning; Child Observation and Assessment; Family and Community Partnerships; Social-Emotional Health and Development Promotion; Health, Safety, and Nutrition; Professional Practice; and Teaching Practice.



CAREER PATHWAY

- The Early Childhood Trainer Credential documents the knowledge and expertise related to the **Colorado Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Professionals** as established through the Early Childhood Professional Credential.
- Credentialed trainers participate in department-approved training and engage in ongoing professional development.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CAREER NAVIGATOR

CAREER OVERVIEW

The *Early Childhood Career Navigator* uses knowledge, intention, reflective practice, and collaboration to inclusively guide, connect and support individuals in the pursuit of a career in the field of Early Childhood Education.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Early Childhood Career Navigators:

- Help early childhood professionals to understand pathways to becoming qualified as an *Early Childhood Teacher* or *Family Child Care Provider*, or other early childhood positions.
- Guide and assist with college applications and other professional development forms.
- Support with the **Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)**, which is the most widely recognized credential in Early Childhood Education in the U.S. The credential is awarded by the Council for Professional Recognition.
- Conduct CDA Observations.
- Find financial resources and scholarships to help pay for the cost of higher education or international transcript evaluation.



CAREER PATHWAY

Career Navigators must hold a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education or a closely related major. The degree must include a minimum of 18 semester hours of coursework in Early Childhood Education/Child Development, studying children from birth through five years. They must have all the requirements to become a **CDA Professional Development Specialist**.

EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTANT

CAREER OVERVIEW

An *Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant*, sometimes called a Behavioral Health Consultant, works as a collaborative team member to support teachers, parents, and community partners in the promotion of age appropriate social-emotional skills, the prevention of social-emotional problems, and the individualized response to behavioral and/or social-emotional needs of young children. Specific job responsibilities vary by employer.

CAREER PATHWAY

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants must hold a master's degree in psychology, counseling, social work, or a closely related field.



EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

CAREER OVERVIEW

The *Early Childhood Special Education Teacher* supports young children with developmental delays and disabilities to achieve learning goals alongside their typically developing peers. Specific job responsibilities vary by employer.

CAREER PATHWAY

Early Childhood Special Education Teachers must hold a master's degree in Early Childhood Education/Special Education with a **Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Licensure** with endorsement in Early Childhood Special Education.



EARLY INTERVENTIONIST

CAREER OVERVIEW

Early Intervention and Child Find

Specialists are trained educators who work with children from birth through age five who have diagnosed developmental disabilities or who are at risk of developmental delays in the areas of cognitive, adaptive behavior, social-emotional, self-care, fine motor, gross motor, and communication. They work with families and an evaluation team who conducts developmental screenings and evaluations.

CAREER PATHWAY

- Each county in Colorado has a **Community Centered Board (CCB)**, which manages and delivers early intervention services to children from birth to age three in partnership with private, and community-based service agencies and providers. Early Intervention Specialists work in CCBs to provide services to children in their homes and communities.
- Local school districts oversee services for children ages three to five through **Child Find**.
- The Child Find Specialist role also requires a master's degree in Early Childhood Education/Special Education with a **Colorado Department of Education (CDE)** Licensure with endorsement in Early Childhood Special Education.



GLOSSARY



Colorado Department of Early Childhood/Division of Early Learning Licensing

The Division of Early Learning and Licensing and Administration (DELLA) licenses Family Child Care Homes and non-home child care facilities. The Division of Early Learning and Licensing and Administration (DELLA) licenses over 5,000 child care facilities in Colorado that provide less than 24-hour care.



Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS)

PDIS is a collective hub of resources, trainings, and reflects all qualifications and credentials for early childhood professionals.



Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

A Colorado Shines rating is a symbol of quality for early childhood education programs. The Colorado Shines rating is a guarantee to families that a program is licensed, in good standing and meets basic health and safety standards. Once programs receive a rating, Colorado Shines provides support to programs to continue to improve quality. Colorado Shines is a flexible process that can be customized to meet the needs of each program.



Expanding Quality in Infant and Toddler Care (EQIT)

The Expanding Quality in Infant and Toddler Care (EQIT) Initiative works with the Early Childhood Councils, Infant and Toddler Specialists, and EQIT trainers to work toward its primary goal of increasing the quality and availability of responsive care for infants and toddlers throughout Colorado by:

- Strengthening the skills and knowledge base of early childhood professionals working with infants and toddlers
- Building capacity and promoting systemic change to foster increased quality and availability of care and services
- Supporting leadership and collaboration at the community level
- Facilitating professional development for infant and toddler professionals, particularly those who are teaching or coaching infant and toddler teachers



Pyramid Colorado

The Colorado Pyramid Plus Center transitioned to Healthy Child Care Colorado in 2020. Through support from the Buell Foundation and a Transition Team of stakeholders, together they created a strong plan to ensure sustainable state-level infrastructure and programming for this vital component of Colorado's growing and evolving early childhood system.

GLOSSARY



Colorado Early Childhood Coach Credential

Aligned to the Colorado Competencies for Early Childhood Coaches, the Colorado Early Childhood Coach Credential provides statewide recognition to early childhood professionals who have the foundational skills and dispositions necessary for effective coaching in the early childhood field. Credentialed coaches participate in department-approved, coaching-specific training and engage in ongoing professional development with a trained reflective supervisor to maintain their coach credential.



Colorado Competencies for Early Educators and Professionals

Competencies describe what a professional knows and can do. In early care and education, there are endless pieces of knowledge and many skills that you apply every day as you care for and educate young children. One set of competencies can't possibly include everything you do everyday because it would be too long. All of your interactions with children, families, colleagues, and consultants build your skills and are important to your professional development. But not all of these skills can be documented. A set of competencies, therefore, aims to describe the big picture of what matters most to children and families in early care and education settings.



Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)

The Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential is the most widely recognized credential in Early Childhood Education, and it is a key stepping stone on the path of career advancement. The CDA is based on a core set of competency standards that guide early childhood professionals toward becoming qualified educators of young children. The Council works to ensure that the nationally transferable CDA is a credible and valid credential, recognized by the profession as a vital part of professional development.



CDA Professional Development Specialist

PD Specialists have the opportunity to mentor, coach, meet new people, and observe educational environments. PD Specialists use Early Childhood Education expertise to assess CDA candidates' competencies and facilitate reflective conversations with the candidates.

GLOSSARY



Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

The Educator Talent Licensing Office is a resource for general requirements and all licenses and authorizations.



Community Centered Board (CCB)

Case Management Services assist a person in accessing necessary services and supports to meet his or her needs. Services include intake, eligibility determination, service plan development, arrangement for services, delivery of services, service and support coordination, monitoring, any safeguards necessary to prevent conflict of interest between case management and direct service provision, and termination and discharge from services.



Child Find

Child Find for children ages three through five years old is part of Colorado's system for identifying children suspected of having a delay in development as early as possible. If a young child is not meeting typical developmental milestones, or someone is concerned about the child's growth or learning, a referral can be made to Child Find.

WHERE TO FIND EARLY CHILDHOOD CAREERS

Visit the [Joint Initiatives Career Page!](#) 



SCAN ME

[Jointinitiatives.org/ECEcareers](https://jointinitiatives.org/ECEcareers)

In addition to searching broad hiring platforms, be sure to visit JI's career page, which highlights opportunities posted by local community organizations and early childhood education programs. Joint Initiatives also posts positions available within its organization, including JI's early childhood department of Foundations, which includes Alliance for Kids, El Paso County's Early Childhood Council.



Collaborating To Change Lives





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CONNECT WITH A CAREER NAVIGATOR!



BuildMyECECareer.com 

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