

North Carolina Early Educator Certification (EEC) Frequently Asked Questions

North Carolina is the first in the nation to increase its workforce professional development standards by certifying the education of those who work directly with, intend to work with, and/or work on behalf of children ages birth to twelve. The NC Institute for Child Development Professionals (Institute) is the certifying body for Early Educators in North Carolina. The mission of the Institute, since 1993, is to foster the development of a comprehensive early childhood professional development system.

What is Early Educator Certification (EEC)? EEC assesses an individual's verified level of educational achievement based on a standardized scale and assigns an EEC level. As with other occupations, EEC recognizes and validates the educational accomplishments of Early Educators. Individuals, children, programs, and society benefit when the education of those working in a profession increases and is known by all its consumers - families, employers, legislators, business and industry, funders, and more.

Why should I get certified? EEC provides you:

- One document for use with all child care programs in North Carolina
- Discounts (EEC Rewards) on purchases of goods and services
- A free year of membership in the North Carolina Early Childhood Association
- Professional status
- Access to information about continuing education opportunities
- And more!

What is an EEC level? An EEC level is a step on a standardized scale. Currently, the Institute certifies individuals on two scales: the Early Care and Education Professional Scale (ECE Scale) or the School Age Professional Scale (SA Scale). Each scale reflects the amount of education earned in the content area pertinent to the ages of children served. The ECE Scale is designed for individuals working with or on behalf of children ages birth to five. The SA Scale is designed for individuals working with or on behalf of children ages five to twelve who are served in school age care settings.

To find out if a college or university is regionally accredited go to:
www.chea.org/directories/regional.asp

Credit for professional work experience and education from institutions that are not regionally accredited are not used to determine a certification level.

Is a test required to be a certified Early Educator in NC? No test is currently required to become certified.

What is the difference between EEC and individual licensure? EEC is acknowledgement of an individual's verified level of educational achievement, based on a standardized scale. EEC does not issue a personal or teacher license or grant permission to work.

How much does it cost to apply for initial certification? The fee for initial certification is \$50 for one scale and \$65 for both the ECE and SA scales.

What are the steps to apply for EEC?

- Step 1: Complete and sign the EEC application.
- Step 2: Attach education documentation. See application or website for details.
- Step 3: Duplicate and retain a copy of application materials.
- Step 4: Attach a check or money order.
- Step 5: Mail the application packet to NC Institute for Child Development Professionals, PO Box 959, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

What documentation is provided to demonstrate certification? Certified Early Educators receive a personalized wallet-sized card and an official certificate with the Institute seal. EEC cards may be used to access EEC Rewards (discounts) from various national and in-state businesses (see <http://ncicdp.org/certification-licensure/eec-rewards/> for a list of participating vendors).

Does EEC expire? An individual's certification is valid for either three or five years, based on the assigned certification level. The expiration date is noted on the official certificate and EEC card.

How much does it cost to renew my EEC? The fee for renewal is \$25 for one scale and \$35 for both scales, if completed prior to the issued expiration date. *The EEC team encourages individuals to apply at least four months prior to their expiration date.*

Is continuing education required to maintain EEC? Yes. As with all occupations, ongoing education is required to stay up-to-date on the latest research and resources to inform practice. To maintain EEC, individuals certified on the Early Care and Education Professional Scale must continue their professional development by completing four semester hours or six Continuing Education Units (CEUs) or a combination of the two within their certification validity period. Those certified on the School Age Professional Scale must complete two semester hours or three Continuing Education Units (CEUs) or a combination of the two within their certification validity period.

- All courses in general education, school age or early childhood will count for renewal for those who have at least six semester hours focused on the age group for which they are currently certified.
- Early Educators certified at level 4 or 8 with NO focused coursework must take semester hours focused on the age group for which they are currently certified. CEUS will not be accepted for renewal.
- Early Educators assessed with one to five hours of focused coursework within their certification level may take CEUs, but if they choose to take semester hours to meet their renewal requirements, they must take semester hours focused on the age group for which they are currently certified.
- Professionals certified with a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree and 12 semester hours focused on the age group for which they are currently certified may receive credit for teaching a CEU session for a minimum of 5 contact hours (or .5 CEUs) that meet renewal requirements. Each CEU session may be counted toward renewal only once per validity period.
- Professionals certified at levels 12 or 13 may also receive credit for teaching formal coursework that meets renewal requirements. The same course may receive credit toward renewal only once per validity period.

CEU sessions must be worth at least .5 CEUs (5 contact hours) to count toward renewal.

The letter included with certification packets gives individualized renewal details. More information about CEU requirements can be found at <http://ncicdp.org/certification-licensure/renewal/>.

Who is responsible for submitting ongoing education documentation? Individuals are responsible for submitting documentation of ongoing college coursework and continuing education to remain certified. If credit-bearing coursework is completed at a regionally accredited college or university, individuals may be eligible for a higher certification level prior to the expiration of their certification. While individuals are not required to renew early, they may choose to submit official transcripts for reassessment. To have a certificate reprinted at a higher level prior to the expiration date, there is a fee of \$25. Please see the EEC Update Form for more details.

Is EEC required by law? EEC is a voluntary professional certification system.

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