

Career Pathways FAQ

What are the Growing Futures Career Pathways?

The Growing Futures Career Pathways outline standards for professional preparation by defining the qualifications expected for employment in various early care and education career positions. The Pathways identify the levels and content of training and education expected for specific careers. This can help early childhood professionals see the range of career options available to them in the field and plan their ongoing professional development in ways that increase their qualifications and opportunities.

Who are the Career Pathways for?

The Career Pathways are for all early care and education professionals whose work applies to children ages birth to 8 years of age, from teacher assistants to trainers and higher education faculty, family child care providers, Head Start staff, consultants, and administrators.

What is the purpose of the Career Pathways?

Professional development is about preparing to meet the specific needs of young children and their families – and that takes intentional planning and focused training. The Career Pathways can be used to:

- Guide individuals in planning and preparing for careers in the field
- Assist employers to write job descriptions and hire well qualified employees
- Give direction to training and education organizations to help them design programs that support career preparation based on clearly identified core content

The Career Pathways support important state initiatives and projects including ND DHS licensing rules, Early Childhood Core Competencies, Bright & Early ND, Head Start Reauthorization Act, and the North Dakota Higher Education Consortium Articulation agreement and common course numbering guidelines.

How can I use the Career Pathways for my own professional development?

The Career Pathways answer these professional development questions and guide the decisions you make for your future:

- What knowledge and skills do I need to be effective in my current position?
- What more can I learn that will help me better support children's development and learning?
- What qualifications could I acquire to expand my career options and grow my own future?
- How can I demonstrate to others that I am well qualified and prepared for the work I do?

How do the Career Pathways align with licensing rules?

Licensing and professional development are not two separate things but rather steps along the path of being an early care and education professional. The Career Pathways are designed to align with and support the North Dakota Department of Human Services child care licensing rules. Career Pathways Category A requirements are met when you complete the 15-hours of basic childcare training that is a licensing requirement in North Dakota.

When you complete the required 15-hours of basic childcare training, you are already on your way with your professional development. This would be a good time to apply to become a member of the Registry so that your professional development record will be a complete history of the efforts you are making to prepare for your career in early care and education. **NOTE: All** direct care practitioners are required to complete the required 15-hours of basic childcare training. This is a licensing requirement. You cannot legally be employed to work directly with children in a regulated or licensed child care without completing the basic child care training. Completion of this training is also required for placement on the Career Pathways in Category A-F.

How was the Career Pathways document developed?

The Career Pathways document was developed by a team of professionals in the early care and education field, including Head Start, Higher Education, and Child Care Aware® ND, and state child care licensing. It is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that it aligns with licensing as well as state and national standards for preparing the early care and education workforce.

What does my Career Pathways category mean?

In a nutshell, your Career Pathways category identifies the preparation you currently have and the early care and education career positions for which you are qualified. Your placement also helps you see how you can continue to grow in the profession and identifies your next steps for training and education.

How is my Career Pathways category determined?

In any job, there are certain things you need to know and be able to do to perform the job well. The **ND Core Competencies for Early Education and Care Practitioners** define the knowledge and skills that are expected of early childhood practitioners in our state. The Career Pathways organizes the skills and knowledge defined in the Core Competencies into categories to show the qualifications expected for employment in various career positions in the field.

When you become a Registry member, you are asked to submit verifiable records of the training and education you've completed. That information is compared against the requirements of each Career Pathways category and used to determine your career qualifications and your category placement. If you decide not to send in verification of your education, credentials, or other qualifications, your placement will not accurately show how well qualified you are. **NOTE:** Categories A-D are cumulative. That means that you must complete ALL of the requirements in each category before you can be placed in a subsequent category. For example, if you have not completed the requirements for Category A, you cannot be placed in another category until you have fulfilled the Category A requirements.

What if I think my Career Pathways placement is incorrect?

If you feel that you have been inaccurately placed in a particular Career Pathways category, contact the Registry office to discuss your concerns. Usually, it is simply a matter of making sure that you have submitted all the information that is used to determine your placement. Sometimes, there is a discrepancy between the name you give on your Registry application and the name on some of your documents, such as your official transcripts. When that happens, Registry staff may be unable to determine what documents belong in your file.

How can I take the next steps in my professional development?

When you become a Registry member, you receive a Career Pathways designation based on the professional preparation (e.g. training and education) you have completed and documented to date. You will be able to print your Registry membership card and *Certificate of Achievement* that you can display to show others the qualifications you bring to your work.

Use the Career Pathways to plan and select your ongoing professional development in ways that build your competence and add up to something meaningful and useful to you, such as earning a CDA Credential or becoming an approved trainer. As you complete the preparation for each Career Pathways category, you'll be demonstrating to parents, employers, and others that you are well prepared for the work you do.

It's easy to request an update to your Career Pathways placement simply by renewing your Registry membership are www.ndgrowingfutures.org