

# CAREERS IN EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

## A National Directory



# CAREERS IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

## A National Directory, Sixth Edition

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# CAREERS IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Child Care Services Association and its national division are excited to release the sixth edition of the Careers in Early Care and Education Directory. As you review the directory, you may find yourself asking why we are promoting an ECE career when the complex ongoing issues that have historically plagued the ECE workforce seem insurmountable. Early education program administrators are still grappling with staffing shortages and need solutions that make compensation sustainability a reality. Undoubtedly the ECE workforce has reached a critical juncture as it tries to stabilize from the impact of the pandemic.

In the face of these overwhelming challenges, ECE workforce advocates must remain undeterred and continue to advocate for education that is rewarded with fair, meaningful compensation. There are well-documented, powerful stories that speak to the many ways in which the pandemic highlighted the fragility of the workforce and presented challenges too dire for many to overcome. Despite these unprecedented challenges, the workforce has continually demonstrated its resiliency, kept pushing forward and stayed on course to maintain an unwavering commitment to young children.

In this directory, you will find wide-ranging descriptions of the many career options that exist in early care and education. This edition has added profiles of new career opportunities that began trending since the fifth edition was published. Each of the careers profiled introduces you to real people from across the country who are currently working in critical roles with young children and their families or performing other specialized functions on behalf of the workforce.

As workforce advocates, we must continually work to address the issue of compensation and make the attainment of formal education a necessity. Early educators with early childhood degrees and experience in the classroom have lots of opportunities. Whether one chooses to remain in the classroom directly caring for young children or would like to experience mobility in other careers, formal education is vital.

Today, there are tremendous opportunities available to support early childhood educators' professional development and growth! Higher education institutions are offering robust ECE AA and BA degree-granting programs composed of coursework that is accessible through various formats. To help remove roadblocks to accessing education, there are various workforce initiatives and supports across the country that offer scholarships to help educators earn a debt-free college education.

Comprehensively designed ECE apprenticeship opportunities have become increasingly available. These promising programs can be used as recruitment and retention strategies to attract aspirational teachers into the field. They can provide individuals with real-time exposure to on-the-job learning experiences, mentoring supports, wage progression and access to higher education.

I hope that you find this ECE Careers Directory to be an informative resource that can help inform the field about ECE career options and that you consider sharing the directory with those you advise or mentor.

Sincerely,

Edith Locke  
SVP, Professional Development Initiatives  
Child Care Services Association

# GLOSSARY

## of Selected Early Childhood Work Environments

**PUBLIC PRE-KINDERGARTEN (PRE-K) PROGRAMS** serve children ages 3 to 5 years, and may be targeted to specific children and offered to families in a public school, non-profit and/or for-profit private facility. Some of these programs operate for half of the day while others follow regular school hours. In addition, some programs may provide wrap-around services to care for children after school. Funds for public pre-K programs come from local, state or federal governments, and parents may pay no fee or a fee adjusted to their income.

**CHILD CARE CENTERS** provide care and education for children ages birth to 5, and may include before- and after-school care and summer care for preschool or school-age children. Centers vary by size, ages of children served and mission. Most centers operate for more than four hours per day. Centers may be operated by non-profit agencies, for-profit owners or corporations, and are typically regulated by a public agency. Funding primarily comes from parent fees with some parents able to receive government assistance.

**FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES** serve small numbers of children and are usually regulated by a public agency that is responsible for overseeing the provision of child care and/or school-age services. Funding comes primarily from parent fees, the subsidized child care system and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

**HEAD START** programs provide developmentally appropriate early learning activities plus health, nutrition, early intervention and family support services. Most Head Start programs serve 3- and 4-year-old children from low-income families in both center-based and home-based settings. Early Head Start is limited to children from birth to 3. Head Start centers traditionally operate four to six hours a day for nine months of the year. Some centers provide services all day, year-round. Others provide seasonal programs for children of migrant families. Head Start programs may be operated by public schools or other non-profit community organizations. In some communities, you may find Head Start and/or Early Head Start classrooms in licensed child care programs. Funding primarily comes from the federal government and parents pay no fees.

**CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL (CCR&R) AGENCIES** help families find the child care they need and educate families and the community about early care and education availability, quality and costs. CCR&R agencies also help child care providers improve quality through training, technical assistance and other supportive services. Many CCR&R agencies also provide financial assistance for families that need help paying the full fees charged for child care or information on where to find assistance with child care fees.

**IN-HOME CARE** usually is provided to the children of a single family in that family's own home. Sometimes in-home caregivers live with the family and/or may be related to the family. These caregivers may or may not be related to the children in care and depending on state law, may be required to be regulated or licensed. Funding for in-home care comes primarily from parent fees.

**PRIVATE PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS** may be based in a center, place of faith or in the community. They may provide early education programs that typically offer educational enrichment and social interactions for children ages 2 to 5 years. These programs usually operate on a part-day basis, two to five days per week. Funding comes primarily from parent fees.

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

## Child Care, Head Start and Pre-K-Based Programs

The job of teaching preschool children in a center-based program can be extremely rewarding and challenging. Between birth and kindergarten, children experience remarkable developmental changes. An infant teacher's daily activities are very different from those of a teacher of 4-year-olds. Teachers may work with typically and atypically developing children. As well as a commitment to learning how to best educate and care for young children, teaching young children requires that you have knowledge about and learned skills in:

- ☀ **children's growth and development,**
- ☀ **planning activities for children in a creative learning environment,**
- ☀ **securing a safe and healthy place for children to play and learn,**
- ☀ **communicating with an increasingly diverse population of children, their families and community professionals, and**
- ☀ **effectively managing groups.**

Teachers may hold a variety of positions in center-based settings. Beginning teachers are often called Assistant Teachers or Teaching Assistants, and work under the supervision of a more educated, experienced teacher. In larger programs, teachers with more education and experience may earn the title of Lead Teacher. This position entails more planning and supervision of other teachers, as well as center administrative responsibility. All individuals who work directly with young children should be certified in CPR and first aid and have a criminal background check in addition to having coursework, credentials or degrees in early childhood education and/or a degree in early childhood special education.

Teaching young children in center-based programs can vary by setting. The type of agency that operates the program can make a big difference in what is expected of teachers and what teachers can expect in terms of compensation, career advancement, work environment and the quality of early care and education provided to children. Most commonly, teachers are found working in child care centers. These centers may be operated by Head Start programs, places of faith, schools, colleges, mental health agencies, non-profit groups, non-child care employers/industry, chains/corporations or for-profit providers. Some programs operate only a few hours a day or a few days a week while others are open 12 hours or more a day, five days a week. Most operate under state or federal regulations. In many states, these programs can choose to be a part of the state's Quality Rating System to show they provide higher quality early care and education. There is increasing interest in and funding for pre-K programs focused on helping 3- and 4-year-olds acquire the skills they will need to start school. Pre-K programs are found in diverse settings and often have state or federal funding. Some are targeted at children at risk for school failure, while others are universally available. Teachers in those settings often earn substantially more than teachers working in traditional child care centers and must have higher levels of education and/or a teaching license.

### Job possibilities at:

- Child care centers
- Private preschool programs
- Head Start programs
- Publicly-funded pre-kindergarten programs

### Recommended education:

- Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential
- Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development
- Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development



### SEQUOYAH BROWN

Lead Pre-K Teacher at Moulton Elementary School, Moulton, AL

**Highest Level of Education:** Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Athens State University, master's degree in progress at the University of West Alabama

**Former Career Pathway:** Auxiliary teacher for seven years, Lead Pre-K Teacher for two years

*"My work involves creating relationships with my students first and creating a classroom family. I also strive to build relationships with my parents as well. We are a TEAM! I plan developmentally appropriate activities each week according to the theme. I encourage social interaction with all of my students. Most importantly they learn through play while learning some of the skills needed for Kindergarten.*

*I chose this field because I love making a difference in each child's life. The most rewarding thing about my job is creating lifelong relationships with my students and parents. I get hugs and smiles throughout the day from previous students. They don't hesitate to yell down the hall, 'Hey, Mrs. Sequoyah!' I hope they will always remember that I am one of their biggest supporters."*

# FAMILY CHILD CARE EDUCATORS

Family child care educators may work with young children in a child's home or in their own home. They may work with as few as one child or care for several children at one time. In a home setting, the educator is responsible for providing a safe and stimulating environment (both indoors and outdoors) for children, planning developmentally appropriate activities, ensuring children are given nutritious meals, communicating with parents about the program and their children, setting and collecting fees and managing and marketing a small business.

Often, parents see the home setting as a friendly, comfortable and natural environment for the care of young children. Many family child care educators begin this career because they have a preschool child of their own and want additional income for themselves and a social experience for their child. In some states, home-based settings have either no or only minimal regulations to meet, depending on the number of children served and the hours of operation. In others, family child care homes are required to be licensed and may be able to meet higher standards associated with a state's Quality Rating System. Many family child care homes do not focus on a specific age group and serve children from infancy up to age 12.

Family child care homes receive funding from parent fees, may participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program to help support adequate nutrition for children and may also receive reimbursement for families who receive public or private child care assistance. Most in-home caregivers, often called nannies, operate solely on parent fees. Because of the limited number of children that can be cared for in a home setting, additional sources of revenue can enhance an educator's earning potential.

## Job possibilities at:

- Private homes

## Recommended education:

- Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential
- Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development
- Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development



## LATIDA ADAMS

Owner and Operator of A Brilliant Beginning Daycare LLC, Durham, NC

**Highest Level of Education:** Master of Education from UNC Wilmington in Leadership, Advocacy and Public Policy in Early Childhood Education

**Former Career Pathway:** Family child care provider for 24 years, advocate and leader and Family Child Care Business Coach

*"Working in this field has been the most rewarding to me because I get to see the fruits of my labor. To see the children grow from infancy to young scholars with big confidence knowing that I played a part in their early education foundation brings me joy."*

# MILITARY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

## Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes on US Military Installations

Military early childhood educators work on military bases and other military installations (camp, post, station, etc.) to provide specialized care to young children of military families. The typical job duties of military early childhood educators are similar to those of teachers of young children in center-based care, Head Start, pre-K-based programs and family child care homes. However, it is especially important for military child care providers to tailor their care to best serve children in military families. Due to the transient nature of military life, military early childhood educators must be a source of stability for the children they serve.

Military-affiliated programs have their own regulations and staffing requirements that are separate from the standards other child care centers are held to by the state. One of these requirements is that all military child care centers are required to meet national standards for accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC-accredited programs must meet various standards for quality in early childhood education, meaning that educators hired to work at NAEYC-accredited centers must have comprehensive education and experience and a commitment to the career.

The military provides several different child care options to military families, including family child care, center-based care in facilities operated by the Department of Defense and supplemental child care such as short-term care or hourly, flexible care that may be on location in a child care center or in other locations such as a satellite site closer to a service member's worksite. Mandatory trainings for military early childhood educators include early childhood development, age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate care, child abuse prevention and CPR/first aid training. Due to the nature of the work, military child care educators may be required or choose to travel in the United States and/or abroad.

### Job possibilities at:

- Military installations
- Private homes that meet DoD standards of care (for family child care providers)

### Recommended education:

- Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential
- Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development
- Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development



# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION APPRENTICES

Early childhood education apprenticeships can serve as an effective, rewarding and flexible gateway into the ECE field. ECE apprenticeships allow individuals interested in careers as early education teachers to pursue their education while completing paid, on-the-job training and receiving financial support for their tuition. This role provides an option for anyone who wishes to pursue a degree, training or coursework in ECE but may face barriers such as financial concerns or a lack of time or needs help navigating the higher education system. Apprenticeships can open doors for anyone who wishes to be a competitive candidate for a career in early childhood education. What's more, this option can be especially promising for non-traditional students, English language learners, first-generation college students, low-income students, parents or anyone who might typically lack access to the resources needed to pursue a college education.

ECE apprenticeships are sponsored by an employer, which is usually a center director. Often, the sponsor offers an apprentice paid time to attend classes and complete their coursework (also known as "release time"). As part of this agreement, the employer also increases the apprentice's salary as they reach certain milestones in the completion of their coursework and development of classroom skills. The classroom tasks of an ECE apprentice are similar to the work of a birth to 5 teacher in center-based care, as described above. However, ECE apprentices are typically assigned to work with a more experienced mentor in the classroom who can help the apprentice put the information learned from their ECE coursework into practice.

The level of education attained as part of an apprenticeship program varies depending on the program. While some programs may offer sponsorship of associate or bachelor's degree, others sponsor an industry-specific credential such as the CDA. Upon completion of the program, apprentices will receive a certificate of proof and will be well on their way toward a future career as a birth to 5 year-old teacher.

The work of an ECE apprentice can be time-consuming and rewarding. Apprentices must be willing to juggle their work in the classroom at the same time as their studies, and may also be required to complete additional assessments of their skills. However, apprenticeships offer a unique opportunity to gain specialized skills, receive one-on-one mentorship and set the apprentice on a path to a thriving career in early childhood education.

To learn more about ECE apprenticeships, visit [tinyurl.com/ekswrcftf](https://tinyurl.com/ekswrcftf).

## Job possibilities at:

- Child care centers
- Private preschool programs
- Head Start programs
- Publicly-funded pre-kindergarten programs

## Recommended education (dependent on apprenticeship program):

- Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential
- Other ECE Credential
- Associate Degree in ECE/Child Development
- Bachelor's Degree in ECE/Child Development



## LINDA WEST

Early Childhood Educator, First Roots – Wild Roots, Hinesburg, VT

**Highest Education Level:** College courses in ECE

**Former Career Pathway:** ECE teacher

*"I completed the Vermont Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship Program while working full-time and attending classes. My plan is to continue college classes to get a degree in ECE to help further my career. For me, I find one of the most rewarding things about working with children is watching the excitement on their faces when they've accomplished a goal, whether it be learning how to climb a little higher in a tree or jump off that risky rock. The moments right afterward, when their face has a giant smile, they're beaming with pride, and they're just so full of pure happiness. It's the absolute best thing to be able to celebrate those milestones and accomplishments with them. I thank the ECE apprentice program for giving me access to gain even more tools to be doing exactly what I love."*



# ADMINISTRATORS/DIRECTORS OF CENTER-BASED PROGRAMS

Early care and education center administrators/directors have the challenging job of ensuring that center-based programs offer developmentally appropriate experiences for children, support families' needs and operate with sound administrative and fiscal management. A center administrator's job often requires formal education and learned skills. The administrator/director must have the combined skills of a mentor, social worker, early childhood educator, nutritionist, accountant, human resources manager, secretary and program administrator. An advanced degree in early childhood program administration can provide the variety of training necessary to master this position.

A child care administrator/director must ensure that:

- ☀ **the program maintains all of the required local, state and federal standards,**
- ☀ **teachers are appropriately screened, educated, well-trained and provide developmentally appropriate education and care,**
- ☀ **children are always properly supervised, even when the regular classroom teacher is unable to come to work,**
- ☀ **children's nutritional needs are met, even when the cook is sick or parents have forgotten to pack a lunch,**
- ☀ **the center establishes and collects tuition or fees,**
- ☀ **the center has ample enrollment and seeks available resources to support operating expenses, professional, well-paid staff, nutritious meals, creative learning environments and other needs,**
- ☀ **the program maintains healthy, safe and stimulating indoor and outdoor environments,**
- ☀ **parents are involved with the center and able to communicate their needs and concerns,**
- ☀ **the center meets its financial obligations, including paying teachers and other staff a worthy wage and benefits and**
- ☀ **the center represents itself in the community through work with other agencies.**

If the center is very large, the administrator may have an assistant administrator/director to help meet these responsibilities. Administrators/directors work in centers operated by Head Start, places of faith, schools, mental health agencies, non-profit corporations or for-profit providers. Some are part-time programs while others are open 12 hours a day or more. Some operate under state or federal regulations and others operate without any outside regulations. Some serve less than 12 children while others serve hundreds in multiple sites. Some programs that operate full-time, and year-round may only have part-time administrators/directors. These differences help determine what is expected of administrators/directors and what they can expect to earn.

## Job possibilities at:

- Child care centers
- Private preschool programs
- Head Start programs
- Publicly-funded pre-kindergarten programs

## Recommended education:

- Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development with coursework in administration
- Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development with coursework in administration
- Graduate degree in Early Childhood Program Leadership and Administration



## KHADIJA LEWIS KHAN

Executive Director, Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center, Providence, RI

**Highest Education Level:** Master's Degree in Elementary Education, ECE Certified

**Former Career Pathway:** Substitute Teacher

*"My main role is recruiting, hiring, securing funding, and providing a supportive work environment for early childhood educators to have a profound impact on children's social-emotional and cognitive development. I have been in this role for more than 22 years and I see the crucial difference our team makes in the lives of children and families. As early childhood educators, we affect eternity with every child we touch and it's a privilege to provide them with a Beautiful Beginning!"*

# FAMILY SPECIALISTS/COUNSELORS

Family specialists/counselors include a wide variety of early childhood professionals who help individuals access the resources they need to care for themselves and/or their children. Some families may only need help finding a child care, Head Start or pre-K placement. Other individuals faced with economic barriers, may need support services to pay for child care or college. Occasionally, families may experience health, developmental or emotional crises that require special intervention services. A family specialist may provide information and education, refer families to services, assess eligibility for funds to pay for services or deliver direct counseling and support services.

Family specialists/counselors need to have a basic understanding of child and family development, child care licensing regulations, knowledge of community resources (private and public) and the ability to communicate this information to parents. Family specialists/counselors may provide services in the child's home, an early care and education setting or in an agency office. Some have particular content expertise such as child care referral counselors who help families learn about the various types of child care and what is available in their community, or child care social workers who assess eligibility for child care subsidy. Others may need to know about a wide range of education and support services and be able to respond to the diverse needs of the individuals they serve. For example, the family services coordinator in a Head Start program may need to help families find appropriate housing, access transportation to work, locate employment, enroll in college or provide counseling needed as the result of a divorce or separation. An education counselor must have knowledge about higher education and the array of community services available to support students earning low incomes.

Family specialists/counselors may need to assess community needs for services as well as individual family needs. Often, they visit families at their homes or provide families with transportation to obtain needed services. They may also provide parenting education and coaching during home visits or through workshops in the community. They may offer educational activities and materials and model their use during these home visits. Family specialists/counselors must be respectful of cultural diversity and sensitive to families' individual needs. In addition, family specialists/counselors must be good listeners and effective communicators and have the ability to collaborate with service providers and other family specialists/counselors in the community to ensure that families get all the services they need. Lastly, they must have good documentation skills. Often the data they collect through interactions with families is used to document changing community needs, gaps in services and to shape new services/supports to meet those needs.

## Job possibilities at:

- Child care resource and referral agencies
- Head Start programs
- Local departments of social services
- Health and mental health agencies
- Community agencies

## Recommended education:

- Bachelor's or graduate degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development, Public Health, Social Work, or Nursing



## MEGAN MILLER

Regional Coordinator for Business Supports/ECE Special Projects Coordinator, Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development

**Highest Level of Education:** Master of Education

**Former Career Pathway:** Adult educator teaching ESOL and GED, substitute teacher in K-12, summer camp counselor

*"In this position, I find working with families to make their childcare experience successful to be endlessly rewarding. Educating them about all of their child care options, empowering them to feel confident in their decisions, and connecting them with the community resources they need makes a positive difference in the world."*

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SPECIALISTS

Technical assistance (TA) is consultation provided either on the phone, by email or on-site in response to a staff question to follow up about an observation occurring during an on-site visit or to help improve the quality or administration of a program. **Early Childhood TA Specialists** assist an individual classroom, multiple classrooms and/or entire programs to start, address corrective action requirements and/or achieve higher program quality. TA Specialists work with programs for varying lengths of time to help them use research-based teaching practices designed for children at different stages of development. Specialists may also work with program administrators to strengthen business knowledge and skills and work with community stakeholders to reach common goals.

Providing on-site TA and support is an interesting, exciting and rewarding job. People who characterize themselves as self-directed and organized, energetic and willing to learn will be the most likely to succeed in this role. A number of states are beginning to require approval or certification of those who provide technical assistance to early care and education program staff.

**Topic specialists** provide resources, training and technical assistance to teachers and programs to support the use of best practices in a particular area. Examples of specialty areas include early intervention, accreditation, outdoor learning, child health, school-age care, child behavior, curriculum and infant toddler care. Specialists provide on-site technical assistance, mentoring and training for teachers to increase their awareness of effective teaching strategies and the resources available to them. A specialist's work may be very narrowly defined (i.e., to support the needs of a particular child, direct intervention or planning small group activities) or it may be broader, such as improving the quality of infant classes in a program.

Specialists must be willing to continually seek out, learn about and share available resources. This task requires collaboration with consultants, early care and education programs, technical assistance personnel and local community services. They may also help collect and compile data using simple survey tools, project evaluation and quarterly reporting on the services provided. Working as a topic specialist requires ongoing training to keep abreast of the latest research.

All early childhood technical assistance specialists must possess effective oral and written communication skills, have computer experience and be comfortable working with colleagues and a diverse client population internal and external to the organization. This role requires an in-depth understanding of state child care licensing and programmatic requirements. Specialists must be able to juggle many responsibilities while paying close attention to detail. Often this role requires managing administrative work and a large caseload of technical assistance and trainings. A number of states are beginning to require topic specialists to have a specific approval or certification and best practices to inform their work. Continuing topic education may lead to the specialist developing written articles for use in an agency newsletter or as a supplement for training on a specific content area.

## Job possibilities at:

- Child care resource and referral agencies
- Professional associations
- Public and non-profit agencies
- Local health departments

## Recommended education:

- Bachelor's or graduate degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development, or Child Psychology
- A degree in Youth Development, Education, or Recreation for those planning to work with school-age children
- Additional advanced coursework or certificate in the specialty area



## TRACI STRAZDAS

Early Childhood Consultant/Contractor, Nebraska Department of Education

**Highest Level of Education:** Bachelor of Science

**Former Career Pathway:** Preschool teacher, preschool owner and director, program evaluation and My Teaching Partner coach

*"I feel lucky to say that I am never in the same place on any given day. I work with programs, teachers, and providers all across the state to provide coaching, training, and program evaluation. When asked why, the answer is always simple. I remain dedicated to this field and give it my all to ensure children and families receive the highest levels of quality they deserve."*

# INFANT AND TODDLER MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS

Infant and Toddler Mental Health Specialists provide virtual or in-person consultation and mental health services to families, caregivers and child care programs who have concerns related to infant and toddler mental health, trauma and social-emotional needs. Infant and Toddler Mental Health services help prevent and address behavioral issues, facilitate collaboration among parents and child care center staff and improve the quality of care for infants and toddlers undergoing stress.

Services provided by Infant and Toddler Mental Health Specialists can include education to help providers and parents understand trauma's impact on young children, help plan classroom strategies and techniques to address behavioral needs, on-site classroom observation and evaluation, support to caregivers as they navigate how their own mental health and beliefs that may be impacting the care they provide and more. In addition to classroom services, Infant and Toddler Mental Health Specialists may work at the individual level to support families with concerns such as pregnancy and perinatal care and postpartum mental health. Infant and Toddler Mental Health Specialists may also help provide referrals and connect parents and caregivers to other resources in the community that can support them. Infant and Toddler Mental Health Specialists may also consult with medical providers, the legal system, policymakers and researchers whose work requires an understanding of early childhood trauma.

Infant and Toddler Mental Health Specialists must possess excellent oral and written communication skills, resilience and strong self-care practices, "people skills" and dedication to the communities they work with. In addition to understanding the kind of trauma any child may experience, a specialist must also possess cultural humility and knowledge of traumas faced by the specific communities they work with, whether that be the ongoing impacts of poverty, ableism, racism and discrimination, or the result of an acute traumatic event such as a natural disaster or an act of violence. Infant and Toddler Mental Health Specialists must have specialized knowledge and understanding of brain development in very young children and infants, acquired through a master's degree in social work, child development, psychology or a related program with possible additional advanced coursework and training specific to infant and toddler development.

To learn more about this career, visit [tinyurl.com/594v999v](https://tinyurl.com/594v999v). To see examples of a day in the life of an ECE mental health consultant, visit [tinyurl.com/yur5r53x](https://tinyurl.com/yur5r53x).

## Job possibilities at:

- Mental health clinics and agencies
- Public and non-profit agencies
- Self-employed
- Head Start programs

## Recommended education:

- Master's Degree in Social Work, Child Psychology, Child Development or related field
- Additional advanced coursework and certification related to infant and toddler mental health



## HEIDI WHITNEY

Program Manager, WellPower, Denver, CO

**Highest Level of Education:** MSW, LCSW IMH-E Infant Mental Health Specialist

**Former Career Pathway:** Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, Supervisor

*"Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation pairs a mental health clinician with programs and environments where young children learn and grow. The main focus of consultation is on preventing expulsion for young children and increasing caregiver capacity through relationship-based and trauma-informed practices. We support children through screening and support caregivers to access early intervention and other resources that the child or family may need. No two days are exactly alike! I have continued to stay in this work because I love getting to walk alongside caregivers, problem-solving challenging classroom scenarios and watching young children grow and thrive within the relationships with their caregivers!"*

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SPECIALISTS AND TRAINERS

Professional development specialists or trainers help teachers and administrators develop, plan and achieve continuous learning goals. Some professional development specialists serve in a significant coordination role, helping ensure that there is a comprehensive array of professional development offerings to meet the needs of the early childhood workforce in their community, region or state. These specialists research the needs and desires of the workforce. They then are able to create professional development opportunities that align with those needs, whether they are offered at the program, community or state level. These specialists ensure that the professional development activities are accessible, high quality and affordable and may offer community calendars with various options. Professional development specialists must possess good written and oral communication skills and be able to: (1) collaborate, plan and partner with other agencies or institutions providing professional development, (2) describe the learning objectives for any offered professional development and (3) evaluate the effectiveness of any offered professional development.

Professional development specialists may also provide workshops, webinars and courses based on their personal areas of expertise and education. Topics may vary from basic health and safety to more advanced subjects like assessing children's development or using certain types of classroom and teaching improvement tools. They may focus on a particular age group like infants and toddlers, or a particular area of development such as social/emotional well-being. Training opportunities may be offered at conferences, in stand-alone workshops or in early care and education programs. Prior experience with teaching young children or administering an early childhood program in addition to formal education is extremely helpful. Most importantly, professional development specialists know state and federal standards of best practice, meet their state's approval standards for trainers and continue their own professional development to stay abreast of current developments in the early childhood education field.

## Job possibilities at:

- Colleges/Universities
- High Schools
- Child care resource and referral agencies
- Professional associations
- Public and non-profit agencies
- Self-employed

## Recommended education:

- Bachelor's or graduate degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development or Youth Development



## NITA MCADOO

Lead Technical Assistance Specialist, Child Care Services Association, Durham, NC

**Highest Level of Education:** M.S. Family & Consumer Sciences

**Former Career Pathway:** Toddler-Two Teacher, Preschool Teacher, Program Director, Professional Development Specialist, Grow-A-Teacher Coordinator, Lead Technical Assistance Specialist and Adjunct Instructor, Early Childhood

"My work involves conducting on-site observations, coaching, modeling, professional development planning, and providing feedback to improve teaching practices in early learning environments. The delivery of services include facilitating training, providing support around education goals and career pathways, creating individualized professional development plans using S.M.A.R.T. goals embedded with reflective practice.

"In my mind professional preparation and ongoing professional development (PD) for the early childhood education workforce is essential to providing high-quality services to children and families. Quality professional development activities provide the foundation for ensuring all children aged 0-5 receive quality teaching and learning outcomes.

"(The most rewarding part of my work is) seeing the improvement in classroom practices and improved quality interactions for children fostered by professional development activities. It is a joy to witness teachers implement activities that further support children's social and emotional functioning and prepare them for academic success in the future. It also warms my heart when administrators embrace professional development and grow as mentors and leaders within their programs."

# RESEARCHERS

Researchers specializing in the area of early childhood conduct studies and evaluate services and practices to understand: (1) what practices lead to high-quality early childhood classroom or home environments and positive outcomes for young children, (2) the demographics, qualifications and needs of the early childhood workforce or (3) how different public policies impact different aspects of the early care and education system. In this role, an early childhood researcher may develop data collection tools, manage data collection activities, collect qualitative data, conduct quantitative analyses and write reports and grant proposals for outside funding.

Depending on seniority, responsibilities may also include developing and leading new projects, maintaining client relations, designing research and evaluation studies, presenting findings to outside audiences, writing grant proposals for outside funding, participating in professional scientific meetings and scholarly activities and publishing findings in peer-reviewed publications. Researchers should also have excellent outreach, research, data analysis and grant and report writing skills, as well as a strong foundation in early childhood education. Researchers may also need specialized training on standardized classroom or early childhood program evaluation tools.

## Job possibilities at:

- Colleges/Universities
- Government and state agencies
- Non-profit and for-profit research agencies

## Recommended education:

- Graduate degree or Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, or related areas with knowledge of, and expertise in, Early Childhood Education



## LEA AUSTIN

Executive Director, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley, CA

**Highest Level of Education:** Doctorate of Education

**Former Career Pathway:** Program Associate, Program Coordinator, Research Associate, Co-Director, Executive Director

*"I work with a dynamic team that provides research and analysis on the preparation, working conditions, and compensation of the early care and education workforce as well as systems issues like public funding. I have the privilege to undertake work that is aligned with my values and in the service of a vision of a system that secures racial, gender and economic justice for our nation's early educators, nearly all of whom are women, and nearly half of whom are people of color. As this work is meant to change policy, I have the opportunity to engage with a range of stakeholders that include educators, advocates, and policymakers.*

*"I never imagined myself becoming a researcher. But as I built relationships with educators through the professional development initiatives I was working in, my questions about their working conditions and pay, the inadequacies of public policy responses, and ways in which educators and other women of color in the space were systematically tokenized and sidelined, led me to search for other ways to participate in the sector and eventually to graduate school and research focused on the experiences of educators."*

# HIGHER EDUCATION FACULTY

Faculty members in early childhood departments at community colleges and universities have a critical role to play in ensuring that the early childhood workforce has the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to meet the needs of the young children and families they serve.

These adult educators must have:

- ☀ **an understanding of adult learning and effective teaching practice,**
- ☀ **the ability to meet the needs of a diverse student population,**
- ☀ **the knowledge and skills needed to develop and teach the required courses in classrooms on campus, in communities and/or online,**
- ☀ **advanced education and, ideally,**
- ☀ **prior experience teaching young children.**

With an increasingly diverse U.S. population, faculty need to recognize the unique needs of children and families and how to translate those needs into their course offerings. Faculty are often also called upon to serve as advisors for students as they sign up for courses. In that role it is critical to understand a student's particular history and goals, ensuring the student a successful pathway in higher education. Faculty also may be asked to help their early childhood education department meet the standards for their college or university's regional accreditation and/or accreditation for their early childhood department through the National Association for the Education of Young Children. [Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8](#) challenges early childhood departments to significantly improve the content and quality of early childhood higher education, creating more interdisciplinary collaboration and ensuring students are learning and can demonstrate the competencies of highly effective teachers. Thus, it is critical that faculty engage in continuous learning, planning and evaluation.

## Job possibilities at:

- Colleges/Universities
- Government and state agencies
- Non-profit and for-profit research agencies

## Recommended education:

- PhD in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, or related area with knowledge of, and expertise in, Early Childhood Education



## BWEIKIA STEEN

Associate Professor of Education, Early Childhood Internship Coordinator, Academic Program Coordinator, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

**Highest Level of Education:** Doctorate in Education

**Former Career Pathway:** Early childhood educator, public school teacher

*"I always knew I wanted to be in early childhood education. I started working in early care centers in high school at my high school's child care. I also enrolled in an internship in high school and interned in a second-grade classroom. In college, I majored in Liberal Studies and worked in my college's lab school in the infant/toddler/ and preschool classrooms. Upon graduation from my undergraduate program, I taught kindergarten, first, and second grade in public schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. Upon graduating from my doctorate program, I moved to New York and was a professor in higher education at NYU, then Trinity Washington University, and now George Mason University."*

# EARLY CHILDHOOD NON-PROFIT MANAGER

An early education non-profit manager, depending on their position and the size of the organization, supervises all or some of the activities, initiatives and programs carried out by a non-profit. Early education non-profits may serve a vast array of functions and could vary in size, from one to 100s of employees. An ECE non-profit may fall into a specific niche—providing low-cost meals to pre-K programs, for example—or could provide and oversee a broad range of services such as a network of programs including a universal pre-K program and scholarship programs, for example.

A non-profit board is a group of qualified professionals with experience relevant to the organization’s mission, who govern, provide direction and hold the non-profit accountable to its mission. At a typical ECE non-profit, a manager will collaborate with and serve as the liaison between board members and the team of employees to advance the mission and values of the organization. If the organization is large in size, there may be a leadership team of several managers who carry out different roles, each overseeing their own division. For example, a non-profit may have different managers who oversee the daily operations of the organization, the delivery of services and programs and research and evaluation initiatives.

Non-profit managers are often responsible for securing the necessary funding for the organization to execute its mission and often serve as the public face of the team. They have the final responsibility of ensuring that timelines are met, records are maintained, reasonable budgets are created and managed appropriately, there is adequate staff and that staff are given the proper guidance to keep the organization running smoothly. Therefore, ECE non-profit managers should be charismatic, clear communicators with a strong belief in their work. Excellent written and oral communication skills are needed, as well as an extensive background in early childhood education and/or familiarity with the inner workings of a non-profit.

## Job possibilities at:

- Non-profits

## Recommended education:

- Bachelor’s Degree in Child Development, Human Services, or related field
- Graduate degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development, Human Services, or related field
- Graduate certificate or coursework in Non-profit Management



## PAUL LAZENBY

Executive Director, Arkansas Early Childhood Association, Fayetteville, AR

**Highest Level of Education:** Bachelor of Science

**Former Career Pathway:** Pre-K administrator/assistant division director, project manager, trainer, director of operations, counselor, executive director/T.E.A.C.H. manager

“My current work involves daily oversight of the T.E.A.C.H. Arkansas scholarship program, assisting the scholarship staff with our scholarship recipients, interacting with the early childhood community and promoting the scholarship program to Arkansas communities and encouraging partnerships with other entities. As Executive Director of the state early childhood association, I work closely with our Board of Directors on the mission of representing Arkansas’ early childhood workforce on policy issues, current needs and professional development opportunities. In each of my roles in the early childhood field, I see each one as an opportunity to serve and this role is no different. By serving those teachers, directors and others who work directly with our youngest children, I have the opportunity to be a part of seeing permanent changes in the lives of Arkansas families. Assisting these teachers in getting an education is all about child outcomes, bridging achievement gaps, providing equal opportunities for all populations and generating value-added benefits for the economy.”



# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSTS

Early childhood public policy analysts serve as experts on public policies (i.e., laws, government funding, public programs) that impact young children and families. They may conduct their own or call upon existing research to understand the issues child care providers, programs, families, children and communities face. They may evaluate current programs and recommend structural changes to better the early education system at the local, state, national or even international levels. Based on their knowledge and findings, a public policy analyst may advise lawmakers, program creators, public agencies, non-profits and the public about evidence-based practices to improve the health, education, safety and social well-being of young children and their communities.

Public policy analysts must be comfortable with public speaking and have the skills to present information in a precise, accessible and compelling format. Depending on their scope of work, a policy analyst must be able to tailor the information they provide to various audiences and communities.

They must be knowledgeable about federal, state and local policies relevant to the early care and education field and public opinion on said policies. A policy analyst must also be willing to collaborate with various stakeholders, sometimes with opposing interests. Thus, empathy, creativity, interpersonal skills and a willingness to compromise are vital for success in this role.

A master's degree or higher in public policy, public administration, education or a related field is the preferred education level for a public policy analyst role. Some positions are also available to professionals with a bachelor's degree.

## Job possibilities at:

- Non-profits and advocacy organizations
- Government and state agencies
- Colleges and universities

## Recommended education:

- Bachelor's Degree in Public Policy, Public Administration, Education, or related field
- Graduate degree in Public Policy, Public Administration, Education, or related field



## ALBERT WAT

Senior Policy Director, Alliance for Early Success, Washington, DC

**Highest Level of Education:** Master of Education, Master of Education Policy

**Former Career Pathway:** Program coordinator, program director, policy analyst, research manager, researcher

*"I develop a portfolio of grants to state and national organizations who work in coordination and support of each other to advance early childhood policies and investments in a coherent and more impactful way. To make that happen, my colleagues and I provide ongoing thought partnership with our grantees, facilitate peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and connect experts and consultants to our partners. I love that I'm constantly learning more about early childhood policy and advocacy strategies with our grantees, and that I am part of a community of passionate advocates that are building a movement together to make early childhood an undeniable priority for public investments in this country."*

# FINANCIAL AID SOURCES

## T.E.A.C.H. EARLY CHILDHOOD® SCHOLARSHIPS

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Program provides scholarships to early childhood professionals. These scholarships may help support tuition, books and travel costs, paid release time and compensation incentives for coursework completion ([T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Overview](#)). T.E.A.C.H. scholarship participants complete coursework leading to early childhood credentials, degrees or teacher licensure. To learn more, go to: [teachechnationalcenter.org](http://teachechnationalcenter.org) To see if these programs are offered in your state, go to: [teachechnationalcenter.org/contact](http://teachechnationalcenter.org/contact).

## GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Grants and scholarships are forms of financial assistance that do not have to be repaid. All colleges and universities have a financial aid or financial assistance office. When asking for information about a program of study, ask also that a financial assistance packet be sent to you. The financial aid office and the academic program department office will know about the availability of many grants or scholarships. Some websites to begin your scholarship search include, but are not limited to, [collegescholarships.org](http://collegescholarships.org), [scholarships.com](http://scholarships.com), [fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com), [cappex.com](http://cappex.com), and [bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org). Below is a short profile of some grants that may be available to you.



### FEDERAL PELL GRANTS

Pell Grants are awarded to students with financial needs who are either undergraduates or pursuing teacher certification. Visit [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/pell](http://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/pell) to learn more.

### FEDERAL SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY GRANT

The FSEOG is a grant for \$100 - \$4,000 per year for undergraduate students with exceptional financial needs. Funding availability is dependent upon the school. Visit [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/fseog](http://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/fseog) to learn more.

### TEACH GRANT

With a TEACH Grant, students who are planning to pursue a career in education can be given up to \$4,000 per year. To receive a TEACH Grant, students must commit to teach in a low-income school (not child care setting) in a high-need field for at least four years within the eight years after they graduate or the grant will be converted to a loan that must be repaid. Visit [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/teach](http://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/teach) to learn more.

Go to [studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov) to learn more about federal student aid grants. The availability of certain grants is subject to change year to year with changes to state and federal legislation.

## LOANS

Low-interest loans may be another way to finance your education. There are many types of loans to consider. They are often available through the educational institution, local banks or other lending institutions. Federal student loans may be subsidized, meaning students receiving financial aid do not pay interest on the loan until after graduation. Your school's financial aid office should also be able to help you begin your search. For more information about subsidized and unsubsidized federal student loans, go to: [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).

## LOAN FORGIVENESS

Jobs in teaching or public service may qualify you for student loan forgiveness because of the great benefit these occupations provide to your community. This means that after a certain period of time working in these fields and a certain amount of payments, you will no longer have to repay the loan. Two loan forgiveness programs are profiled below. The availability of these programs is subject to change year to year with changes to federal law.

### PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS

The PSLF forgives Direct Loans after a certain number of payments have been made while working in public service. Your employer may be a government organization or a non-profit, including an early care education setting. Visit [studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service](https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service) to learn more.

### TEACHER LOAN FORGIVENESS

After teaching full-time for five academic years in a school or educational service agency that serves a significant amount of low-income families, you could receive loan forgiveness up to \$17,500 toward Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans and Subsidized and Unsubsidized Federal Stafford Loans. Visit [studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/teacher](https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/teacher) to learn more about the program and which schools qualify. An important note is that borrowers cannot receive loan forgiveness for both the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program and the Teacher Loan Forgiveness program for the same period.

## TAX CREDITS

The American Opportunity Tax Credit is a tax credit for students enrolled at least half-time for up to five years of college and can bring down the amount of taxes you owe during the first five years of higher education by up to \$2,500. It is also partially refundable, even when your taxes drop to zero. Visit [irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/aotc](https://irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/aotc) to learn more.

## LINKS:

Financial Aid Home Page: [finaid.org](https://finaid.org)

Federal Student Aid: [studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa)

Scholarship Search: [fastweb.com](https://fastweb.com), [collegescholarships.org](https://collegescholarships.org), [scholarships.com](https://scholarships.com), [cappex.com](https://cappex.com), and [bigfuture.collegeboard.org](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org)

Loans, Scholarships: [salliemae.com](https://salliemae.com)

Financial Aid, Scholarships: [collegeboard.com](https://collegeboard.com)

