



ALABAMA
PATHWAYS



Alabama Child Care and Education
Professional Development System



alabamapathways.org



Alabama Pathways to Quality Care and Education

Child Care and Education Professional Development System

Alabama Department of Human Resources

Child Care Services Division

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Revised 2022

NOTE: This document is intended to serve as a guide for individuals seeking professional preparation and development in early childhood and school-age care and education. The resource information contained herein is revised periodically.

No representation is made by the Alabama Department of Human Resources as to the rules governing programs offered by public or private institutions of higher education, the Teacher Education and Certification Division of the Alabama State Department of Education, or other agencies listed herein. Check with the organizations listed in this guide for the most accurate professional development information.

All programs of the Department of Human Resources are administered in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and all other federal and state civil rights laws.

History

WHAT IS ALABAMA PATHWAYS?

In April 2005, the Child Care Services Division of the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) convened representatives from various early care and education stakeholder groups to begin planning for a professional development system to address the training and education needs of caregivers and teachers in the field of early childhood and school-age care. This collaborative effort was in response to the Bush administration's Good Start, Grow Smart initiative "for the purpose of improving the preparation and ongoing development of early care and education providers."

The goal of the Alabama Child Care and Education Professional Development System, or Alabama Pathways to Quality Care and Education (Alabama Pathways), is to provide a path to support and advance the best practices of those who care for and teach children from birth through 12 years.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN ALABAMA PATHWAYS?

Along with the commitment of preparing children for success in school and in life comes the necessity of preparing early childhood and school-age care professionals to meet the collective and individual needs of children.

“Research makes it abundantly clear that early childhood educators with more professional preparation provide more developmentally appropriate, nurturing, and responsive care and education experiences for young children.”

– Beyond the Journal. Young Children on the Web. March 2007: Professional Development

Research also indicates that obtaining training and education with specialization in child development and early childhood education fosters caregivers and teachers who understand how children develop and learn and who provide higher quality learning environments for children.

Alabama Pathways is designed to help individuals who work in various early childhood and school-age care settings identify appropriate professional preparation and ongoing professional development that is specific to child development and early childhood education. The early childhood and school-age care professionals who benefit from participating in Alabama Pathways care for and teach children in programs that are required to be licensed and those that are exempt from being licensed.

THE VARIOUS ROLES AND POSITIONS OF THESE PROFESSIONALS INCLUDE:

- » Licensed center directors, assistant directors, teachers, and support staff
- » License-exempt center directors, assistant directors, teachers, and support staff in church ministry, state agency, university/college, federal/military, and federally recognized tribal programs
- » Family and group home providers and group home provider assistants
- » Relative care providers related by blood, marriage, or adoption: grandparent, sibling, aunt or uncle, and their spouses
- » Head Start/Early Head Start teachers, directors, coordinators, and support staff
- » Pre-K teachers and assistant teachers in Office of School Readiness state-funded sites, public schools, and private schools
- » Special education teachers
- » Early intervention service coordinators
- » School-age caregivers and teachers in public and private schools, beyond regular school hours
- » Part-time program staff in YWCAs/YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and Mother's Day Out
- » Non-traditional caregivers such as homeschoolers, nannies, and respite caregivers

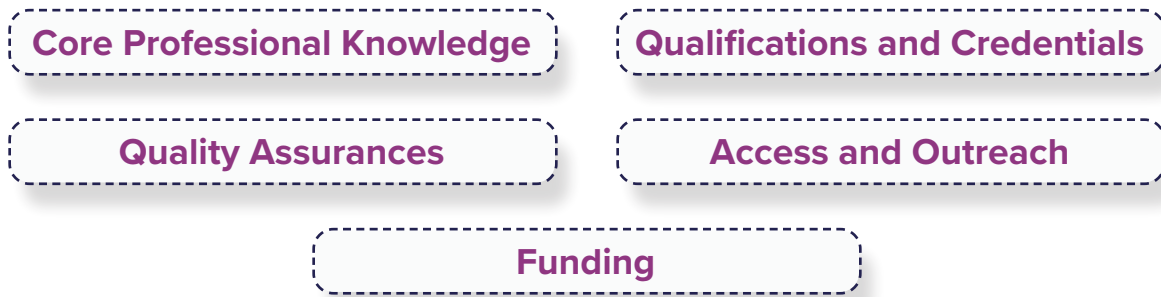


Introduction

Alabama Pathways is established on the precedent that professional development is a continuous process that begins with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that early child care professionals and directors possess upon entering the field of early childhood and school-age care. It proceeds with expanding professional learning and application abilities to ensure high-quality care and education through improved caregiving and teaching.

The early childhood and school-age care professionals who benefit from participating in Alabama Pathways care for and teach children in programs that are required to be licensed and those that are exempt from being licensed.

The key elements necessary for improving the quality of care and education provided by all individuals in early childhood and school-age care settings are:



THIS DOCUMENT PROVIDES EARLY CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-AGE CARE PROFESSIONALS WITH:

- » **Core Knowledge Areas** foundational for developmentally appropriate caregiving and teaching
- » **A Professional Development Lattice** identifying progressive levels of training and education to promote effective practices in early care, education, and school-age care
- » **Resources for Qualifications and Credentials** directing caregivers and teachers to agencies and organizations that mandate training and education requirements, award credentials, or that compile information on requirements and credentials
- » **Resources for Child Development and Early Childhood Training and Education** including agencies, organizations and educational institutions that provide pre-service (prior to employment) and in-service (during employment) professional development opportunities
- » **Resources for Financial Assistance** identifying potential sources of financial assistance to obtain training and education in early childhood and school-age care

Overview

Alabama Pathways addresses the need for a comprehensive professional development system that incorporates the key elements necessary for improving the quality care and education provided by all individuals in early childhood and school-age care settings. This document is meant to serve as a tool to help you better understand the opportunities available for growth and expansion as you charter your career in early child care in Alabama. In 2022, DHR launched a new Alabama Pathways website to serve as the Professional Development Registry (PDR) for all licensed child care providers in the state of Alabama.

The Professional Development Registry is designed to track the professional development of the child care workforce, including all training and education components needed to satisfy the requirements of the licensing Performance Standards, Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) health and safety, Child Development Associate (CDA) tracks, and Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

The PDR website is designed as a resource to provide a path to support and advance the best practices for those who care for and teach children from birth through 12 years. The Alabama Pathways website is a free online resource for early childhood professionals working in child care facilities and can be found at alabamapathways.org.



Core Knowledge Areas

Core professional knowledge is the range of knowledge and skills that early childhood and school-age care professionals need to facilitate children’s learning and development. The eight Core Knowledge Areas identified in Alabama Pathways serve as a foundational checklist of knowledge, skills, and abilities that high-quality caregivers, teachers, and administrators need to be effective.

1. CHILD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- » Understand how children develop cognitively, socially, emotionally, and culturally
- » Understand how children acquire language and creative expression
- » Understand the links between development and learning
- » Understand the roles and responsibilities of parents, educators, and caregivers
- » Understand the environmental, biological, social, and cultural influences on growth and development



2. HEALTH, SAFETY, AND NUTRITION

- » Understand the major issues affecting the health and safety of young children
- » Know how to establish and maintain an environment that ensures each child’s healthy development, safety, and nourishment
- » Understand health record keeping and its policy considerations
- » Know how to implement food safety practices, menu planning, nutrition activities for children, CPR, First Aid, and accident/infectious disease prevention

3. LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ENRICHMENT

- » Understand developmentally effective approaches to teaching and learning
- » Know how to establish a learning environment that meets each child’s needs, capabilities, and interests
- » Know how to utilize knowledge of academic disciplines to design, implement, and evaluate programs that promote positive development and learning for young children

Continued on next page

Core Knowledge Areas (Continued)

4. DIVERSITY

- » Understand and value diversity in society
- » Know how to encourage family involvement in early multicultural learning
- » Know how to support anti-bias curriculum in early childhood programs
- » Know how to develop effective methods for working with families of varied cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds

5. CHILD OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT (PLANNING FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS)

- » Understand methods for observing children's development, behavior, and progress
- » Know how to observe and assess what children know and can do
- » Know how to document children's growth, development, and learning
- » Know how to use informal and formal assessments to plan activities and individualize programs to provide a curriculum that meets each child's developmental and learning needs



6. INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

- » Understand and value the importance and complex characteristics of children's families and communities
- » Know how to establish supportive relationships with children, guiding them as individuals and as members of a group
- » Know how to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families to be involved in their children's development and learning
- » Know how to work collaboratively with families, agencies, and organizations to meet children's needs
- » Encourage community involvement with early childhood care and education

7. PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- » Understand the importance of serving children and families in a professional manner
- » Understand the importance of seeking opportunities for professional growth, including topics such as advocacy, ethics, and leadership
- » Know how to use ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to early childhood practice
- » Know how to be a continuous, collaborative learner who demonstrates knowledgeable, reflective, and critical examination of his/her work
- » Know how to make informed decisions that integrate knowledge from a variety of sources
- » Know how to participate in community activities as representatives of early childhood care and education as informed advocates for sound educational practices and policies

8. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

- » Understand legal, fiscal, and advocacy issues, staff and program development, supervision, and evaluation
- » Understand financial planning and management
- » Understand the principles of adult development and learning
- » Know about the educational facility and its daily operations
- » Know how to effectively implement child care policies and licensing regulations
- » Know how to make determinations of community child care needs, marketing, and public relations opportunities



Alabama Pathways Professional Development Lattice

The Alabama Pathways Professional Development Lattice is a system that provides early care and education professionals with a tool to track their professional development. Each user can identify her/his current place on the lattice, as well as the progressive path to enhanced training and education within the field of early care and education.

The Alabama Pathways Professional Development Lattice reflects eight levels of training and education to guide caregivers and teachers of children from birth through 12 years on the path that promotes high-quality care and education.

The levels include training, credentials, certificates, and degrees in child development, early childhood education, and elementary education, with a focus on knowledge and skills specific to early care and education. The training and education resources include agencies, organizations, and institutions that provide training and education specific to early childhood and school-age care.

| LEVEL | TRAINING AND EDUCATION | RESOURCES |
|----------------|--|---|
| Level 1 | <p>Performance Standards training requirements and/or Alabama Early Learning Guidelines (AELG) credential</p> <p>Alabama Infant/Toddler credential</p> | <p>Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR), Child Care Services Division</p> <p>DHR quality enhancement contractors</p> <p>Local, statewide, regional, and national professional child care organizations</p> |
| Level 2 | <p>Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or other national credential in child/care/early care and education</p> | <p>Council for Professional Recognition</p> <p>DHR regional quality enhancement contractors</p> <p>Alabama Community College System (ACCS) institutions</p> |
| Level 3 | <p>Short certificate and/or certificate in child development/early care and education</p> | <p>Alabama Community College System (ACCS)</p> <p>Two-year institutions</p> |

| LEVEL | TRAINING AND EDUCATION | RESOURCES |
|----------------|---|---|
| | Associate in Applied Science/Technology (AAS or AAT) | |
| Level 4 | Degree in child development/early care and education and/or Associate in Arts/ Science (AA or AS) Degree in child development/early childhood education, including 18 child development/early childhood specific credits | Alabama Community College System (ACCS) Two-year institutions |
| Level 5 | Bachelor's degree in child development, early childhood education, or elementary education, including 30 child development/early childhood specific credits | Athens State University Public and private four-year colleges and universities |
| Level 6 | Master's degree (MS) in child development, early childhood education, or elementary education, including 15 child development/early childhood specific credits | Public and private four-year colleges and universities |
| Level 7 | Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree in child development, early childhood education, or elementary education, including 15 child development/early childhood specific credits | Public and private four-year colleges and universities |
| Level 8 | Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree or Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree in child development, early childhood education, or elementary education, including 15 child development/early childhood specific credits | Public and private four-year colleges and universities |



Qualifications and Credentials for Early Childhood Professionals

The qualifications and credentials required for early child care professionals depend on the type of program and the position for which an individual is seeking initial employment, is currently employed, or is pursuing promotion in employment. All professionals working in a child care program licensed by DHR are required to meet education and training qualifications, as specified in the Child Care Licensing and Performance Standards.

Similarly, teachers and assistant teachers working in Office of School Readiness (OSR) state-funded pre-K programs and individuals working in Head Start/Early Head Start programs must satisfy education and training qualifications and professional development requirements mandated by their agencies. Alternatively, child care programs exempt from DHR licensing may elect to establish their own requirements for staff qualifications and credentials.

Exempt programs include those operated by church ministries, state agencies, universities/colleges, boards of education, federally recognized tribes, the federal government/military, and those operating four hours or less per day. Also exempt from DHR licensing are relative child care providers: Grandparents, brothers, sisters, stepbrothers, stepsisters, half-brothers, half-sisters, uncles or aunts, and their spouses.



State Agencies

Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE)

Serves as a coordinating board for Alabama higher education

(334) 242-1998 | ache.edu

Alabama Community College System (ACCS)

(Two-year Institutions)

Directs and supervises educational programs and services provided by the ACCS

(334) 293-4500 | accs.edu

Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE)

Alabama Head Start State Collaboration Office

Promotes collaboration among Head Start, state government initiatives and agencies, and others concerned with early care and education in Alabama

(334) 324-1316 | children.alabama.gov

Office of School Readiness (OSR)

Operates the state-funded pre-K program

(334) 314-0023 | children.alabama.gov

Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR)

Child Care Services Division; Office of Child Care Licensing

Licenses and monitors child care centers for compliance with Performance Standards

(334) 242-1425 or 1-866-528-1694 (Toll-Free) | dhr.alabama.gov

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS)

Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS)

Provides a coordinated, family-focused system of supports and services for children with special needs

1-800-441-7607 | rehab.alabama.gov

Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE)

Provides information about teacher education and certification

(334) 694-4900 | alabamaachieves.org

Statewide Transfer and Articulation Reporting System (STARS)

Provides transfer guides for students planning to transfer from Alabama community colleges to public universities in Alabama

1-800-551-9716 ext. 3690 | stars.troy.edu

National Agencies

Council for Professional Recognition

Awards the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential

1-800-424-4310 | cdacouncil.org

National AfterSchool Association (NAA)

Provides accreditation for afterschool/school-age programs

info@naaweb.org | naaweb.org

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

Provides accreditation for family and group home child care providers

(202) 796-5700 | nafcc.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Provides accreditation for center-based or school-based early childhood programs

1-800-424-2460 | naeyc.org

National Child Care Association (NCCA)

National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC)

Provides accreditation for early care and education programs. Also awards the Certified Childcare Professional (CCP) credential and National Administrator Credential (NAC)

1-877-537-6222 | nationalchildcare.org

Statewide Professional Organizations



**Alabama Association
for Young Children (AAYC)**

**Alabama Association of Licensed
Early Care and Education (AALECE)**

**Alabama Christian
Education Association (ACEA)**

**Alabama Family Child
Care Association (ALFCCA)**

Alabama Head Start Association

Child Development and Early Childhood Training and Education

Child development and early childhood training is available in Alabama through a variety of resources. It is usually for contact hour credit, but in some cases, may be for continuing education unit (CEU) credit.

The training content may be designated as basic, intermediate, or advanced based on the education and experience of the intended audience. It may also be categorized based on the Child Care Licensing and Performance Standards training areas and the Child Development Associate (CDA) competency standards.

Child development and early childhood training is provided through professional organizations, DHR quality enhancement contract agencies, and some colleges and universities.

Office of School Readiness (OSR) pre-K and Head Start/Early Head Start programs provide their staff with in-service training that is sometimes available to other early childhood professionals. Most educational institutions in the Alabama Community College System (two-year colleges) offer programs in child development or early care and education. Some four-year public and private universities and colleges offer programs in child development through the Departments of Human Development and Family Studies or Family and Consumer Sciences.



The early childhood education program is generally offered by a university or college through its School of Education and leads to teacher certification. Appropriate accreditation of an educational institution and/or a specialized program of study can affect transfer of coursework from one institution to another.

**Individuals who plan to attend more than one institution should check with the institution they plan to transfer to and determine whether the institution they are planning to transfer from has the appropriate accreditation. Individuals are encouraged to check whether institutions have institutional and/or programmatic accreditation by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.*

Alabama Community College System (ACCS)

Two-year institutions that offer programs in child development or early care and education

Athens State University

(256) 233-8100 or 1-800-522-0272 (Toll-Free) | athens.edu

Bevill State Community College

(205) 648-3271 or 1-800-648-3271 (Toll-Free) | bscc.edu

Bishop State Community College

(251) 405-7000 | bishop.edu

Calhoun Community College

Decatur: (256) 306-2500; Huntsville: (256) 890-4700 | calhoun.edu

Central Alabama Community College

(256) 234-6346 | cacc.edu

Chattahoochee Valley Community College

(334) 291-4900 | cv.edu

Enterprise State Community College

(334) 347-2623 | escc.edu

Gadsden State Community College

(256) 549-8200 | gadsdenstate.edu

Jefferson State Community College

(205) 853-1200 or 1-800-239-5900 (Toll-Free) | jeffersonstate.edu

Lawson State Community College

(205) 925-2515 | lawsonstate.edu

Lurleen B. Wallace Community College - Andalusia

(334) 222-6591 | lbwcc.edu

Northeast Alabama Community College

(256) 638-4418 | nacc.edu

Northwest-Shoals Community College

(256) 331-5200 | nwsc.edu

Reid State Technical College

(251) 578-1313 | rstc.edu

Shelton State Community College

(205) 391-2211 | sheltonstate.edu

Snead State Community College

(256) 593-5120 | snead.edu

Southern Union State Community College

(256) 395-2211 | suscc.edu

Trenholm State Community College

(334) 420-4200 | trenholmstate.edu

Wallace Community College - Dothan

(334) 983-3521 | wallace.edu

Wallace State Community College - Hanceville

(866) 350-9722 | wallacestate.edu



Alabama DHR Quality Enhancement Agencies

- » **Regional Quality Enhancement contract agencies** serve regions that include every county in the state and provide the foundational training that allows child care providers to meet the Performance Standards pre-service and in-service training requirements. Training is offered through various means, including workshops and conferences, as well as on-site, distance, and virtual learning.
- » **Targeted Quality Enhancement contract agencies** provide training to address a specific need or to focus on individuals who are underserved or who have not traditionally participated in other quality enhancement activities.

More information on these agencies can be located at: dhr.alabama.gov/child-care/quality-overview.



Financial Assistance

The Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) provides quality enhancement funds for the implementation of two scholarship programs that provide support for early care and education professionals: the Leadership in Child Care Scholarship and the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) Early Childhood® Alabama Scholarship.

These programs are available for individuals interested in obtaining a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, certificate, or an associate degree in child development or early care and education, and a bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

The Leadership in Child Care Scholarship is administered by the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) and is available for eligible applicants working in licensed, license-exempt, and school-age care programs.



The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Alabama Scholarship is administered by the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) and is available for child care center teachers and directors working in licensed child care programs. The Office of School Readiness (OSR) provides T.E.A.C.H. scholarships for child care center and preschool teachers working in licensed child care centers or OSR-funded pre-K classrooms to obtain bachelor's degrees in early childhood education or child development.

Head Start/Early Head Start programs use professional development funding to support their staff in obtaining the CDA credential, and two-year and four-year academic degrees in child development or early childhood education. Colleges and universities may provide grants and scholarships specific to their institutions.

Institutional financial aid offices can provide information about different kinds of assistance that are available. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used to apply for federal student aid. Free information and help with applying for federal student aid is available from the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-433-3243 or studentaid.gov.



Alabama Pathways is a program of the Alabama
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