

— A CCR&RS GUIDE TO —

POWER TO THE PROFESSION

**Understanding the
Recommendations from
Decision Cycles 345+6**

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INTRODUCTION

Power to the Profession is a national collaboration whose goal is to define the early childhood profession by establishing a unifying framework for career pathways, knowledge and competencies, qualifications, standards, and compensation. Child Care Aware® of America (CCAoA) is proud to be one of the 15 task force members in this important work.

This e-book is part of a series of e-books on Power to the Profession. The [first e-book](#) explored the purpose and goals of the initiative. The [second e-book](#) provided ideas and suggestions on what Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies can do to prepare internally for Power to the Profession, including thinking about staffing and professional development opportunities. The [third e-book](#) provided ideas and suggestions on what CCR&Rs can do externally to spread the word about Power to the Profession.

The purpose of this e-book is to share the recommendations from the Task force on the newly released discussion draft 2 [Decision Cycles 345+6](#) and what these recommendations may mean for early childhood educators and the CCR&R system. Since this is the second draft of this document you can see an overview of the content revisions [at this link](#).

The goal of these Decision Cycles is to establish the very first unified framework of the early childhood education profession that defines the professional preparation, responsibilities, scope of practice, specialization, and compensation needed to drive policy, funding, and systems change in our field.

Key questions asked and answered in these Decision Cycles include:

1. How should the designations within the profession be structured?
2. What preparation programs should be endorsed and supported?
3. Should the early childhood professions have specializations? If so, how should the specializations be structured?
4. What does comparable compensation look like in this profession?

CCR&R agencies play an important role in shaping community conversations around Power to the Profession. In order to do that, CCR&Rs need a better understanding of the latest recommendations and how to communicate it to providers. It will also help CCR&Rs think strategically about planning for these recommendations as an agency.

The following sections describe the Decision Cycles, the main points, and the task force recommendations. We conclude with ways on how CCR&Rs can address these recommendations in their current and future strategic work both within their own agency and with the providers for whom they support. We'd love to hear from you and how you are engaging your community partners in Power to the Profession. Please send us your comments, ideas, and suggestions to let us know how your conversations are going to: P2P@usa.childcareaware.org.

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING THE DECISION CYCLES

Take a closer look at cycles 345+6.

Decision Cycle 3: Professional Designations

What it addressed

Currently, there is no clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of early childhood educators. This Decision Cycle addresses the educator's role within the early childhood profession and proposes to streamline the language of how we define early childhood educators. The varying titles and roles within the early childhood system mean that job responsibilities and wages vary widely across the entire early childhood system. One agency may use titles such as lead teacher or co-teacher and assistants or aides, and these roles may come with very different expectations depending on where the educator lives or works.

While many states have career ladders or lattices to help differentiate roles, they are often difficult for educators to understand, and these systems vary from state to state. Higher levels do not always equate to different job responsibilities or higher wages. There needs to be a clear way to identify and describe the role of early childhood educators that is uniform across different states, organizations, and settings (child care centers, family child care homes, school-based programs, etc.).

Recommendation

Create one early childhood education profession with three distinct and meaningful designations. The task force recommended three distinct designations:

- Early Childhood Educator I
- Early Childhood Educator II
- Early Childhood Educator III

These roles are designed to have specific and meaningful purposes in an early care and education setting. Each of these roles will have different preparation programs that will help educators implement the standards and competencies as defined by Decision Cycle 4.

Decision Cycle 4: Coherent, Quality Preparation Programs

What it addressed

There are a number of different degree programs with varying quality in helping to prepare the early childhood workforce. Moreover, educators often complete professional development training as mandated by state licensing standards or Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and often these trainings do not offer credit or credentials. This variation in preparation and ongoing training results in educators who may not be effective in planning and implementing high quality experiences for young children. The task force also recognized barriers to higher education for some early educators. Innovative approaches such as apprenticeship models, prior learning assessments, and competency-based programs could be designed to reach non-traditional students.

Recommendation

- **Early Childhood Education Professional Training Programs:** Professional training programs normally require less than one year to complete and are a minimum 120 clock hours.
- **Early Childhood Education Associate's Degree Programs:** Associate degree programs normally require at least two years and is at least 60 credit hours of college-level course work.
- **Early Childhood Education Bachelor's Degree Programs:** Bachelor's degree programs normally require at least four years and at least 120 credit hours of college-level coursework.
- **Early Childhood Education Master's Degree Programs (initial preparation):** Master's degree programs normally require at least one, but not more than two, full-time academic years of work beyond the bachelor's degree. Initial-level master's degree programs are designed for individuals with non-early childhood education bachelor's degrees.

Table 1. How education, competencies, job responsibilities, and compensation would look across the three designation levels.

ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
Education Professional training program in ECE (120 hours)	Education Associate's Degree in ECE	Education Bachelor's Degree in ECE or Master's Degree in ECE (initial prep)
Competencies Graduates are introduced to all professional standards and competencies and can apply introductory knowledge and understanding of all the professional standards.	Competencies Graduates understand and know essential aspects of all professional standards and competencies with a focus on birth-pre-k settings and can apply their knowledge to this population.	Competencies Graduates know and understand essential aspects of all professional standards and competencies with a focus on birth-3rd grade settings and can apply their knowledge to this population.
Have high school level knowledge in core general education content areas.	Graduates have introductory level knowledge of general education content areas.	Graduates have college level knowledge of general education content areas.

ECE I

Job Responsibilities

Help develop and sustain high quality learning environments for children **birth-3rd grade** and are effective members of ECE teaching teams.

Compensation

Includes benefits and is comparable to other ECEs with similar qualifications, regardless of job setting, using public school salaries as minimum benchmark.

ECE II

Job Responsibilities

Develop and sustain high quality teaching and learning environments for children **birth-pre-k*** with staffing models that provide frequent access to ECE IIIs for guidance.

Help develop and sustain high quality teaching and learning environments for children **pre-k through 3rd grade.***

Guide practice of ECE I.

Compensation

Includes benefits and is comparable to other ECEs with similar qualifications, regardless of job setting, using public school salaries as minimum benchmark.

ECE III

Job Responsibilities

Develop and sustain high quality teaching and learning environments for children **birth-3rd grade.****

Guide practice of ECE I and ECE II.

Compensation

Includes benefits and is comparable to other ECEs with similar qualifications, regardless of job setting, using public school salaries as minimum benchmark.

**In state-funded preschool programs (as defined by NIEER), provided in the mixed delivery settings and explicitly aligned with the K-12 public school system, ECE II graduates can help develop and sustain high-quality development and learning environments.*

***In state-funded preschool programs, (as defined by NIEER), provided in mixed-delivery settings and explicitly aligned with the K-12 public school system: ECE III graduates must be the lead.*

Decision Cycle 5: Structured Specializations

What it addressed

In order to address the needs of all children birth-3rd grade, professionals must understand development across the entire continuum. Because children develop at varying rates, it is important for all ECE professionals to have a general understanding of development from birth-3rd grade before they specialize in a specific age group (i.e., infant-toddler) or with a specific subset of children (i.e., special education).

Recommendation

The Task force recommends that every early childhood educator have a general understanding and foundation before they specialize in a specific age group (i.e., infant-toddler) or with a specific subset of children (i.e., special education).

Decision Cycle 6: Comparable Compensation

What it addressed

For too long, low compensation has been an issue for the early childhood profession. Recent reports have estimated that fully financing high quality education would cost \$140 billion per year while early childhood education contributes \$163 billion annually to the nation's economy. The investment in early childhood is clearly worth the cost. However, addressing compensation cannot happen without substantial federal support to help ensure equity across the nation. One of the barriers to financing the early childhood system has been the lack of a unified framework and understanding of the early childhood system. Power to the Profession gives the profession clarity about who early childhood educators are and their roles and the accountability in supporting the learning and development of the future workforce.

Recommendation

The task force suggested four recommendations.

First, compensation needs to be comparable for early childhood educators regardless of the setting in which they work. Compensation should not differ among those who choose to work in family child care, community-based settings, or school-based settings.

The **second** recommendation addresses the need for early childhood educators to have benefits that should include paid leave, medical insurance, and retirement. Benefits should also be available to part-time staff on a pro-rated basis.

The **third** recommendation supports increased compensation for early childhood educators as they move up the designation system of ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III.

The **fourth** recommendation states that compensation should not differ based on the age of children served. Thus, infant teachers should be paid on the same salary scale as a teacher who works with preschool children if both teachers are at the same designation level

CHAPTER 2

WHAT THE DECISION CYCLES MEAN FOR CCR&RS

Ideas you can use to strategically prepare for these recommendations.

CCR&R STAFFING CONSIDERATIONS

- Analyze the degree attainment for the CCR&R professional development, training, and coaching staff. What higher educational degrees will staff need to deliver credit-based training and coaching to early childhood educators?
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TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Develop partnerships with local community colleges or 4-year institutions to help prepare early childhood educators by establishing [articulation agreements](#) in order to provide credit-based options for training and coaching. CCR&Rs can and should be a significant partner in training early childhood educators.
- Investigate the Council for Professional Recognition's [CDA® Gold Standard Training Certification](#) program, which recognizes high-quality training programs through an agency self-assessment process. This can help assure that CCR&Rs are providing the highest quality preparation program for ECE I's.
- Think about offering blended learning with online CDA and providing onsite coaching to help strengthen the knowledge gained through the coursework.
- Analyze the current training schedule for early childhood providers. Ask:
 1. Are there different levels of training offered to meet the needs of future ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III?
 2. Do trainings cover both general information about development across the birth-3rd grade continuum?
 3. What will you need to do to offer more advanced training for educators who have degrees?

Consider different approaches to help support early childhood educators—particularly family child care providers—as the profession evolves. For example, CCR&Rs may want to consider establishing communities of practice for providers to help support each other, with a coach or someone with an ECE III designation that can support their work.

CCR&RS AS ADVOCATES FOR THE PROFESSION

- CCR&R agencies can be one of the leading conveners in these discussion in the community with providers, businesses and community partners. You can use the [Power to the Profession Frequently Asked Questions document](#) to help you with your conversations.
 - Join with your partners to develop a community strategic plan around implementing the Power to the Profession recommendations.
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STAY ENGAGED! BE A PART OF THE PROCESS

CCR&Rs can convene staff to discuss the recommendations and help plan for implementation, host community focus groups, and talk about Power to the Profession with early childhood educators in coaching and training sessions. You can use [this slide deck](#) to facilitate your conversations or you can request a complete [tool kit](#) which also includes a sample agenda.

For more information, download [this e-book](#) for additional ideas. Check out the Power to the Profession [website](#) for the most up to date information on the latest recommendations.

ACT NOW

- **Read the draft**
- **Share** the draft with others
- **Complete the survey** and encourage others to as well

We hope you find these ideas and suggestions useful. We want to hear from you! Send us an email at P2P@usa.childcareaware.org and tell us how you are spreading the news about Power to the Profession.



SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

Thank you for joining Power to the Profession in its collaborative effort to define the early childhood education profession. Share your feedback on the decision cycles in this survey.

[Take the Survey](#)