

# The Need for a Comprehensive Range of Licenses to Practice ECE

In 2021, Vermont early childhood educators agreed to align with national recommendations for an early childhood education profession with three professional licenses to practice—ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III (see “Vermont Consensus Document”). Recommendations for ECE I, II, and III licensure designations are proposed in the *Application for Preliminary Sunrise Review Assessment: Recognizing Early Childhood Education as a Licensed Profession in Vermont* (see Q9).

This document is intended to provide clarity around the difference between the proposed ECE III license to practice and current requirements for an AOE teacher licensure with ECE endorsement. These are two different licenses. The three proposed ECE I, II, and III licenses to practice are a key piece of a national framework for professional licensure that bridges system gaps, increases equity for infants and toddlers and their families and for educators in private settings and Head Start, and is necessary to achieve reciprocity with other states.

## ECE III aligns with, and does not duplicate, AOE Educator Licensure.

ECE III licensing requirements align with the current system of public school licensure in Vermont, in that they both rely on the same NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies to practice with young children.

Educators licensed by the Vermont AOE with an early childhood education endorsement are already licensed for the work they do with young children. They do not also need an ECE III license.

If an AOE-licensed educator did decide to also hold an ECE III license, we recommend that licensure steps for ECE III be waived, to avoid a duplicative process.

The reverse is not necessarily true. The process for an ECE III to become an AOE-licensed educator with an ECE endorsement is in the purview of the Vermont AOE and Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators.

## ECE III creates equity for infants and toddlers, and their teachers.

ECE III exists to recognize classroom leadership-level qualifications for preparation and practice readiness for every early childhood educator, inclusive of their career path, program setting, and ages served. There are early childhood educators who will qualify for ECE III and its leadership and compensation privileges for whom licensure through the AOE is not an accessible pathway.

Qualified infant-toddler teachers are part of a high quality early childhood education system: being a qualified early childhood educator for children 0-5 requires a bachelor's degree with specialized training in early childhood education. ECE III provides professional recognition for those educators in private child care settings and Head Start settings who have the degree in early childhood education, but have not completed the additional steps required for educator licensure from AOE.

## ECE III fills gaps in the current mixed-delivery system.

Small community based programs, family child care home programs, and Head Start are important components of Vermont's mixed-delivery system. ECE III offers an avenue to professional recognition for educators in these settings who have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, regardless of the ages they teach. The existing AOE licensure pathway carries some barriers for these early childhood educators: time and expense, in addition to exam and portfolio requirements.

## Professional governance of ECE III licensure aligns with state systems and the framework for a national profession.

The national design of ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III is to unify a fragmented system. This licensure structure is essential to the national *Unifying Framework for an Early Childhood Education Profession*, which is built on the premise of professional equity for early childhood educators across program settings and ages served, and ultimately, leads toward a unified national profession. Vermont's system will need to use the proposed national standards in order to achieve reciprocity with other states.

A key benefit of early childhood education becoming a licensed profession is the establishment of standardized credentials for early childhood educators that are reciprocal and directly transferable across states that align with the recommendations of the *Unifying Framework*. Reciprocal licensure will ease the ability of licensed early childhood educators to relocate to Vermont and continue in their professional roles serving young children and their families without interruption or delay, and with an assurance of safety and security even across state lines.

To support a unified early childhood education system of licensure, a governing board overseeing individual professional licensure needs to be specialized in early childhood education, and maintain oversight over each designation: ECE I, II, and III.

Critically, these workforce-led recommendations are designed to raise—not reduce—professional interest, quality, and ultimately, capacity, by unifying the early childhood education workforce around shared expectations for qualifications rather than sector and age-based differences.

## Sources and more information:

[Sunrise Review: Early Childhood Education \(sos.vermont.gov\)](https://sos.vermont.gov)

[The Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession](#)

[The Commission for Professional Excellence in Early Childhood Education](#)

Vermont Consensus Document: [Three Designations with Aligned Preparation Pathways](#)

[Stalled at the Start: Vermont's Child Care Challenge, 2024](#)

["Let's Not Forget About Quality:" NIERR: State of Preschool 2023 Yearbook](#)

[Vermont Early Childhood Education and Workforce Report: revised 2024](#)

[Advancing Early Childhood Education as a Profession on vtaeyc.org](https://vtaeyc.org)

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