



## Recognizing Professional Achievement

The Gateways to Opportunity Credentials are part of a comprehensive professional development system designed for all practitioners working with children in Illinois.

### What is a credential?

Gateways to Opportunity Credentials are symbols of professional achievement that can be earned by completing an approved program at an entitled college or university, or by completing a portfolio that documents education and experience. These voluntary credentials are available at multiple levels of the Gateways to Opportunity Career Lattice. Gateways Credentials are awarded and recognized by the Illinois Department of Human Services.

The **ECE Credential** validates the knowledge, skills and experiences required to work with young children from birth through age eight. The ECE Credential is available at levels 2-5 of the Career Lattice, which require increasing mastery of the skills and knowledge required to work in the field of early care and education. The Credential is developed from the seven Gateways to Opportunity content areas that are the foundation of the Career Lattice.

The **Illinois Director Credential (IDC)** validates the education, knowledge and experience of Childhood/School-Age administrators. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recognizes the IDC as a national standard of management and leadership capabilities. By achieving the IDC, the administrator is enhancing his or her commitment to the social, emotional, cognitive and physical outcomes for children through administrative experience. This credential is offered at three levels, including the Associate, Bachelor and Graduate degrees.

The **Infant Toddler Credential (ITC)** is a specialized credential available to practitioners who work with infants and toddlers from birth to age three in Illinois. It validates the specialized knowledge, skills and experience needed to work with children from birth to age three. **Practitioners interested in pursuing the ITC must first meet the requirements for the ECE Credential.**

The **Level 1 ECE Credential** is a distinct credential and incorporates the foundation of knowledge required to work in the field of early care and education. This credential can be awarded upon successful completion of 48 hours of training. The Level 1 ECE training series is offered by local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies through the Illinois Trainers Network. The training is divided into 16 three-hour modules. These 16 trainings are designed for entry level staff; family child care providers; relative, friend and neighbor providers; parents; student assistants; home visitors and volunteers; and high school students.

**The School-Age and Youth Development Credential is currently in development.**

### **Two Routes to Earning Gateways to Opportunity Credentials (IDC, ECE and ITC):**

- **Direct Route:** application process in which a professional portfolio is assessed that validates education and experience.
- **Entitled Route:** completion of a Gateways approved program at a two-or-four year institution of higher education.

Please call the Gateways to Opportunity staff at **866.697.8278** if you have questions on any credential or would like to request an application.

