



Certification Procedures



The Certification Council of Early Childhood Educator is a non-profit, volunteer organization that is committed to the development of a high-quality, professional, certified body of Early Childhood Educators.

The Certification Council would not be a reality if it were
not for the following people.

Thank you for your support and commitment.

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Certification Procedures

- A Standard of Excellence
- Individual Personal Development
- Credibility

What is the point of certification?

There are three major arguments which the early childhood education community has found persuasive. These are not ranked for each is seen to be equally important, in spite of the fact that they must be written one after the other.

One argument is that the members of the community have an obligation to ensure families that their young children are looked after in a setting where a high quality of care is provided. As in other professions, a standard of excellence is maintained by an independent organization of its own members and offers one such assurance to those who use the service. Society cannot afford the consequences of adults who mishandle children; do not have developmentally-appropriate expectations for them; misunderstand their interests; or cannot cope well with providing for a group of children. Just as doctors know more about looking after health and disease than teachers or dentists, and dentists know more about looking after teeth than doctors and teachers, so it is argued that early childhood educators know more about looking after preschool children in a group setting than do doctors or early elementary teachers. Therefore, it is early childhood educators themselves who must check the quality of service that they provide. Certification is a measure of the degree to which the group is willing to be responsible for itself to the rest of society.

Another argument is that certification is a formative process that provides personal development for individual early childhood educators. Through identification of strengths and weaknesses and programs to address these, those working with children make an effort to provide better quality care for children. The process of being certified provides a focus for reflection and development in the participants. This is a compelling argument for the humanists interested in “becoming” and in increased awareness among early childhood educators. The process is seen as an instrument for changes in perception, beliefs, and attitudes, which then permit the participant to behave differently or to change aspects of the external environment. For the participants, this is also the argument with the most immediacy, for their commitment to the process of certification becomes part of their daily lived experience.

Another argument is that certification will provide early childhood educators with credibility in society. The public regards meeting a standard of excellence in the work place setting favourably. When early childhood educators provide a skilled human service to a degree of excellence, the service will be valued, not simply because it is necessary, but because it has



merit. It becomes

more difficult to withhold salary, benefits, and working conditions to commensurate with such a valuation. There is the intention, then, that credibility in the eyes of the public will gradually permit increased salaries, benefits, and better working conditions for early childhood educators.

How did this manual come about?

In the spring of 1985, the Preschool Education Association of Nova Scotia (PSEANS) and the Child Development Services of Nova Scotia (IECEDS) jointly invited a consultant to construct a workable manual for early childhood educators from the materials already developed by these groups. Although the initial impetus for revision began with the PSEANS wanting its 209 page competency-based manual reduced, it soon became clear that the interest in province-wide certification was much broader and that there was goodwill on the part of several organizations to work together. Through the year, key persons in both the PSEANS and IECEDS were cooperative and sensitive to the other professional group. This is a living document that is continuing to evolve.

Training Criteria for Certification Applicants:

- Any recognized Early Childhood Education Program as offered in the province of Nova Scotia or that meets the standards as set down by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, The Early Years Branch.
- Those with Levels 1, 2, or 3, approved by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, The Early Years Branch, qualify.
- Those whose training only consists of the “Orientation for Staff Working in Licensed Child Care Facilities” do not qualify.

In addition to the above training criteria, each applicant must fulfill the following:

- All applicants have to be working directly with children in a permanent position for a regular amount of time per week, no less than nine (9) months in any one (1) year.
- Substitutes may only apply for certification if they work a minimum of three (3) days per week for a minimum period of nine (9) months of any given year during the certification period.
- All applicants for certification have to have at least two (2) years of working experience as well as meeting the criteria outlined above.



Certification Procedure:

- 1) Carefully read the brochure “Questions and Answers about ECE and ECCA Certification.”
- 2) Double-check the educational and work experience criteria and ascertain whether you qualify. If you have any queries, please call the Registrar.
- 3) Fill in the application form, ensuring that the following are completed/included:
 - a) The last sheet is dated and signed.
 - b) All relevant educational and work experience is outlined.
 - c) Photocopies of all relevant documents are included.
 - d) A carefully written self-evaluation is completed.
 - e) A cheque made out to the CCECNS is included in the amount designated as the registration fee on the schedule of fees’ sheet for the current year. This registration fee is non-refundable.
- 4) Upon approval of your application, the Registrar will inform you of the other two members of your triplet. One of the triplet members may be in the same centre as you, but we strongly recommend that they not be from the same classroom. Ideally, each should come from different centres. (This supports that the whole certification process will be a rich and varied experience for all involved.) It is mandatory for members of triplets-in-process to attend at least one Annual General Meeting of the Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia (free of charge) during the process.
- 5) When you receive your acceptance letter from the Council, you will also receive:
 - a) Your Mentor’s name and contact information.
 - b) The names of your triplet members and contact information.
 - c) A copy of the Code of Ethics.
- 6) Your Mentor will set up a meeting and distribute criteria, reflective journals, and a Letter of Intent.
 - a) The criteria are discussed on Page 9.
 - b) Reflective journals are written dialogues on the criteria between you and your Mentor.
 - c) The Letter of Intent explains the certification process to your director, co-workers, and parents of children in your centre.
- 7) Read the manual/criteria thoroughly.
- 8) Fill out one of the criteria in detail on yourself to examine your practice, program philosophy, and acquaint you with the content of the criteria.

Please check that you have completed all of the above

before continuing.

- 9) Upon completion of steps 1-8, the certification process begins with the onset of the first visits.
- a) A minimum of four (4) visits to each member of the triplet is required [i.e. you will receive eight (8) visits, and you will give eight (8) visits].
 - b) Your visits to each individual member of your triplet should be spaced at least two (2) months apart.
 - c) We also recommend that you visit your Mentor's centre. This will give you an additional perspective of how other programs and philosophies work.
 - d) The whole process should take a minimum of nine (9) months; however, you may feel that more time is required.

It is suggested that your first visit be an orientation visit. Some people have found it convenient to make notes at the time of the visits and fill in the relevant criteria later while others fill in the criteria on site. Detail is expected and will not only assist you in your self-evaluation, but is necessary for the Validator's assessment. Record any changes you observe in the program, etc., as this shows growth within the triplet member.

Meet with or call each member of your triplet to discuss philosophies, share your observations, and clarify any points of concern after each and every visit.

See Page 6, "The consultation process with triplet members."

At any time throughout the process that:

...you have any concerns;

...you want a meeting for any reason;

...something is not clear in the criteria;

...you are puzzled;

...you just want to talk;

Call your Mentor.



Final Steps:

- 10) When the candidate feels she/he is ready for validation, each member of the triplet should:
 - a) Check that all criteria are complete.
 - b) Write a report on the overall impression of each triplet member; their centre and program; and the working relationship of the triplet.
 - c) Give copies of the criteria and report to each triplet member.
 - d) The Mentor should prepare a reflective letter about the process for each triplet member.
 - e) Request a Validator list from your Mentor and choose a Validator.

At this point, there should be a final meeting with your triplet and Mentor to discuss any concerns, answer questions, etc. Another purpose of this meeting is to exchange copies of criteria, written reports, fee for Validator, name of preferred Validator, copy of your goals, and the Mentor's report. When you receive your completed criteria from the other members of your triplet, re-read and update your own criteria.

- 11) At the completion of the final meeting, have the following ready to mail to the Registrar:
 - a) Three (3) completed criteria – one (1) of which has been completed by you and one from each of your triplet peers.
 - b) Two (2) reports – one from each of your triplet peers.
 - c) One (1) report from your Mentor.
 - d) A cheque to cover your validation expenses in the amount designated as Validator's fees on the fee schedule.
 - e) A copy of your goals.
- 12) Your Validator will be given your papers and will then call you to set up a mutually convenient time for the validation visit.
- 13) The Validator then visits. Please allow at least 2-3 hours for the observation plus an interview immediately following the Validator's visit.
- 14) The Validator will write a report on what she/he observed and will submit this to the Council. The Council will meet at the earliest possible date after receiving all of your documents and the Validator's report.
- 15) All documentation must be submitted to the Registrar three (3) months prior to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) if you wish to receive your Certification Certificate at the AGM.

Note: All decisions regarding certification status are the responsibility of the Executive of the CCECENS.

- 16) You will receive a letter of certification status, a copy of your Validator's report, and your completed criteria from the Executive of the Council.
- 17) The ceremony for celebrating your certification status will be at the AGM.

- 18) If you are not certified, (i.e. your application is deferred by the Certification Council and you do not agree), there is a grievance procedure in place. Write a letter outlining your grievances and submit this to the Council with a copy to the Chairperson of the Grievance Committee. This committee has procedures in place with which to handle your concerns.
- 19) In order to maintain certification status, a yearly renewal fee and letter of accountability will be required. The letter of accountability should outline how you maintained your professional/educational/personal interests over the previous year (i.e. meeting attended, workshops, courses, and memberships).
- 20) If, after being reviewed over two (2) years, the Council feels you have not maintained a professional standing worthy of your certification status, your certification status will be revoked.
- 21) To be reinstated:
 - a) A person with less than five (5) years of lapsed membership must:
 - Be working directly with children for at least six (6) months.
 - Have up-to-date payment of dues.
 - Have a letter of accountability for lapsed time.
 - b) After five (5) years lapsed membership, recertification is required.
 - c) If non-practicing for five (5) years or more, a person requesting practicing status must:
 - Be working directly with children for at least six (6) months.
 - Fill out criteria on themselves.
 - Be visited by a Mentor.
- 22) If your certificate is destroyed or lost, it can be replaced by writing to the Council. Enclose a cheque for \$10.00 made out to the CCECENS.
- 23) For information on the Early Childhood Centre Administrator Certification process, contact the Registrar.

The Consultation Process with Triplet Members:

The certification process allows participants the benefit of a peer mentoring system as the route through which conscious and deliberate reflections about professional work can occur. The process of visiting a colleague for the purpose of assisting her/him in this reflection, and having her/him visit you, enables you to think through what you are doing. Comparing this with specific criteria permits you to choose the areas that you would like to change and to receive support in implementing and evaluating these changes.

This process of mentoring and being mentored by another is a process of growth. It requires patience with the process, and an acknowledgement that some things will be difficult, but that is just fine. These challenges can be accepted and seen as opportunities to problem solve. This is a generative process which, when done to its fullest, can be richly rewarding.

Your Mentoring Role as a Triplet Member:

For this process, a mentor is a person who visits a colleague in action. There is a particular stance regarding these visits that we found to be helpful. The following describes the key aspects of this role:

- 1) **Listening.**
A mentor withholds her/his own agenda and is receptive to what the participant tells her/him. She/He permits a “debriefing” after observing so that the participant can describe what she/he is trying to do and what concerns her/him. The mentor supports her/him in this rather than trying to give expert advice or tell her/him what to do.
- 2) **Constructing a shared agenda.**
A mentor works to construct a shared vocabulary, a common understanding between them; for example, through active listening, debriefing, probing, and clarifying what the participant is trying to do. In addition, they have the Criteria for Certification to refer to. These are explicit, external criteria and part of this shared understanding is communicating with each other about the criteria, its meaning to them, and how they are using it in the setting.
- 3) **Supporting problem solving.**
A mentor supports a problem-solving approach by asking questions (i.e. What could we do about that? How could we get that to work better for you?), and works to elicit solutions and consequences from the triplet peer. Since the peer is the one with the most information about the problem, the solutions she/he generates are both the most likely to work and the ones to which she/he will make a commitment. It gives her/him competence and a disposition to cope. This could be achieved by role-play or discussion.
- 4) **Focus on a specific problem.**
A mentor keeps the session focused on a specific problem or issue. Focusing on the children and the program and what one wants to see happening there avoids digression into personality or teaching style. These are differences that can be threatening to triplet peers and may put them on the defensive.
- 5) **Mentor as scribe.**
Sometimes a mentor can keep a running record of the thinking process the triplet peer goes through on the way to solutions or new ideas. This documentation of process and ideas can be very helpful. It leaves the triplet free to think, knowing that she/he does not have to worry about remembering everything.

6) **Integrity.**

Both mentor and triplet peer maintain their own integrity; that is, their autonomy. If the mentor disagrees, there is no advantage to false sympathy, but an important gain to be had from a different idea put forth. The key is for the mentor to “own” the idea and to present it not as something the triplet peer should do, but simply as different information.

It is often difficult for women to disagree because women value connection to others so very much and disagreement is often accompanied by a feeling of emotional discord. It is a mark of maturity for two adults to disagree and still retain respect and emotional equilibrium for each other.

Mentor:

The Mentor is a certified member in good standing of the Certification Council and is the triplet member’s guide facilitating them through the certification process.

The Mentor will:

- Act as a role model.
- Be a source of information for the triplet (e.g. explain procedure).
- Offer own centre for visitation.
- Contact each member of the triplet on a regular basis to keep in touch and facilitate any problems.
- Visit each member of the triplet during the certification process (either a surprise or scheduled visit).
- Check criteria forms to see they are correctly and fully completed.
- Have meetings with triplet after candidates have completed each circle of visits to centres.
- Arrange for discussions of “ECE Candidate Dialogue” at each meeting. The “Dialogue” becomes a focus for discussions on practice.
- Write a report on how each member of the triplet handled the certification process.
- Conduct the final meeting to review all papers.

Validator:

The Validator is a member of a professional institution, well recognized in the Early Childhood Education field, and has had experience in supervising early childhood practicum.

The Validator will:

- Thoroughly read all paperwork pertaining to your certification.
- Contact you to arrange a visit.
- Visit for at least 2-3 hours (including an interview).
- Write a report on their observations.
- Forward the report/documentation to the Council.
- Check criteria forms to see they are correctly and fully completed.

How to Use the Certification Criteria:

These criteria have been developed over several years with a great deal of input from educators and extensive field testing. It is our hope that you will find it easy to understand and use. The criteria is your “workbook” or guide to use when you are visiting members of your triplet. If you read and fill out a criteria before you start making visits, you will have a good overview of the types of things for which you should be looking.

People use the criteria in two (2) different ways. You can use a notebook to make observations of everything you see during the observation and transpose the notes to the criteria in the appropriate place afterwards, or you can write directly on the criteria using a pencil so that changes can be made at a later date if necessary. Another option is to make notes on a notepad or on a hard copy of the criteria and then transcribe these notes to the electronic version on the computer.

The criteria have been developed with developmentally-appropriate practice as its basis. Therefore, we suggest that you read the following publications. These can be found at Early Childhood Education Support Centres:

- National Statement on Quality Child Care, Canadian Child Care Federation
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8 Expanded Edition. Sue Bredekamp, Ed., NAEYC
- Occupational Standards for ECEs, Developed by the Human Resources Sector Council
- You will also receive journals, (ECE Candidate Dialogues) which will help you examine your own practice.

Educators who are going through this process are to be congratulated since it leads to discussion of philosophy and examination of one’s professional ideals. This reflection can only lead to high quality care for all of the children. Enjoy!!

Glossary of Terms:

- **Child initiated**
The child chooses an activity or creates an activity within a supportive learning framework created by the teacher.
- **Child interactive**
The child talks to/responds in some way to an activity and is listened to/observed but not corrected.
- **Developmentally appropriate**
Programming, activities, equipment, and adult interactions are matched to the child's growing patterns, interests, strengths, and experiences being neither too easy nor too difficult. Programming takes into account regular observations of the child. Activities are open ended in that they allow for more than one correct response or way of achieving a result with an emphasis on process rather than product. Developmentally-appropriate practice would "recognize that each child is unique and has an individual personality, learning style and family background." (NAEYC, Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs from Birth through Age 8, Expanded Edition, Sue Bredekamp, ed.)
- **Didactic**
Teacher transmits spoken and written information to the children and, through questioning, worksheets, and tests, checks to make sure the information has been received (also see "Teacher Directed").
- **Facilitate**

To offer stimulation to individual children or small groups of children as their natural activity suggests, extending ideas and supporting their efforts to explore, think, and empathize with others.
- **Grievance**
A grievance is a cause of complaint regarding the certification process that was not solved satisfactorily during the certification process.
- **Grievance Committee**
A committee made up of certified Early Childhood Educators which has a set procedure in place to investigate and present complaints and possible solutions to the Executive of the Council.
- **Mentor**
A mentor is a person who forms a helpful relationship with another individual to assist them in reflecting on their own practice and developing strategies to enhance and enrich their practice.

- **Non-sexist**
Attitudes and behaviours are non-sexist when they do not simplify children’s attitudes or behavior according to their sex. There is no over-generalizing of a child’s skills or behaviour based on an inequitable standard of sex differences.
- **Non-stereotyping**
Attitudes and behaviours are non-stereotyping when they do not oversimplify children’s attitudes or behavior according to their sex, ability, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. There is no over-generalizing a child’s skill or behaviour based upon an inequitable standard of sex, ability, ethnic, or cultural differences.
- **Overly fragmented**
The program is broken up into too many small parts with not enough time allowed for any one particular activity so children seem to be “bouncing” from one activity to another. For example:

9:00-9:10	Welcome
9:10-9:30	Art
9:30-9:35	Clean up
9:35-10:00	Outdoor activity
10:00-10:15	Snack
10:15-10:30	Circle time, etc.

That is too many transitions and no long periods of uninterrupted play.

- **Overly managerial**
Teacher initiates all of the activities and children initiate none or few of them.
- **Pedagogical/Pedagogy**
Pedagogical/pedagogy is the profession, science, or theory of teaching.
- **Registrar**
A member of the Executive of the Council who is responsible for applications, approvals of applications, distribution of information to interested applicants, answering questions pertaining to certification from triplet members, Mentors, etc., and keeping the Executive of the Council informed regarding the progress of triplet members throughout the certification process.
- **Scaffolding**
Scaffolding refers to the helpful interactions between adult and child that enable the child to do something beyond his or her independent efforts. A scaffold is a temporary framework that is put up for support and access to meaning and taken away as needed when the child secures control of success with a task. Scaffolding might be verbal (through conversation, questions, etc.) or provided through materials, activities, or the set-up of the physical environment.

- **Teacher directed**
An activity that relies heavily on lectures, teacher-centred discussions, and paperwork (e.g. worksheets, workbooks, and crafts that entail following a model) is described as being teacher directed.
- **Transition**
A change of activity or movement from one place or activity to another (e.g. free play to snack).
- **Triplet**
Three (3) Early Childhood Educators who have applied and have been accepted by the Certification Council to go through the certification process and who are working with the manual/criteria, visiting and observing each other's centre, and giving feedback on their observations of each other.
- **Unduly fragmented**
See "Overly fragmented."
- **Validation**
The process which the triplet member goes through with the Validator, on completion of the triplet observations, to confirm the observations recorded during the process, and to further extend the triplet members' awareness of their professional behaviour; plus set goals and discuss and clarify philosophy and methods.

Goal Setting:

The certification Council believes that goal setting is a very important part of the certification process as well as a prudent strategy for our professional conduct. We request that you take time and thought to setting goals for the certification process. Please read the manual/criteria very thoroughly before filling in the goal setting pages. If you require more space, please use an extra sheet of paper. (If this is presented as a computer document, there is no need for extra paper.)

Look at each criteria carefully; fill in goals for each section if you feel it is necessary. You may fill in one or more goals for each criteria or set goals for only one (1) or two (2) criteria. Please be realistic in your chances of achieving your goals.

On completion of the certification process, indicate in each section where you have set goals and whether the goals were achieved. Please indicate what strategies you have set in place to help you reach your goals.

Please read and answer the following goal setting questions:

- 1) What, in your opinion, are your strengths as an Early Childhood Educator?

- 2) What, for you, are the areas in need of improvement or growth?

- 3) What are your short-term strategies to improve or grow in these respective areas? (“Short-term” being the duration of the certification process.)

- 4) What are your long-term strategies to improve and grow in these respective areas? (“Long-Term” being longer than the certification process.)

Goal Setting (continued):

