

Career Counselors – Workforce Advisors

ECE CARE PATHWAYS
One Field. Endless Futures

Early Education Careers: More Than Care — They Shape Futures

Why This Field Matters:

- 90% of brain development happens before age 5 — early educators influence the most important window of learning
- Children in high-quality programs are twice as likely to be ready for kindergarten
- Kindergarten readiness predicts 3rd-grade reading and high school graduation

HELP STUDENTS SEE MORE THAN ONE JOB

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is no longer a single-role profession. The ECE CARE Pathways model shows a full career ecosystem — from classroom teaching to mental health support, public policy, higher education, and business ownership. Counselors can help students discover meaningful careers that grow over time.

WHY RECOMMEND ECE CAREERS

- High-demand workforce with long-term career stability
- Multiple entry points — high school, community college, university
- Transferable skills aligned with psychology, health, education, leadership, and public service
- Clear advancement pathways into leadership, research, and policy roles

CAREER PATHWAYS TO SHARE

Classroom & Entry Roles

Instructional Assistant • Infant/Toddler/PreK Teacher • Family Child Care Assistant

Specialized & Professional Roles

Home Visitor • Early Learning Coach • Intervention Specialist • Child Life Specialist

Leadership & Systems Roles

Program Director • Licensing Analyst • Researcher • Public Policy Advocate

HOW TO GUIDE STUDENTS

Frame ECE as a career ecosystem — not just a teaching job. Students can start early, build stackable credentials, and move into leadership, consulting, or systems-level roles.

CALL TO ACTION

Introduce students to ECE CARE Pathways and help them explore career options that match their interests, strengths, and long-term goals.



Administrators, District Leaders & Workforce Decision Makers

ECE CARE PATHWAYS

*Building the Workforce
Behind Every Workforce*

Why Administrators Should Prioritize ECE Workforce Pipelines

- OC is a child care desert — high demand, low supply, long waitlists, and workforce shortages
- Only 1 in 8 infants/toddlers have access to licensed care; families wait months or years for openings
- Child care gaps cause 71,600 lost jobs annually and \$536M in lost tax revenue in OC

A STRATEGIC INVESTMENT IN REGIONAL STABILITY

Early Childhood Education professionals support families, strengthen communities, and enable workforce participation across all industries. The ECE CARE Pathways framework expands talent pipelines beyond teaching into leadership, policy, higher education, and specialized services.

WHY INVEST IN ECE WORKFORCE PIPELINES

- Supports economic development and employer stability
- Creates leadership pathways within education systems
- Strengthens early learning quality and long-term student outcomes
- Connects education, health, social services, and public policy sectors

PIPELINE OPPORTUNITIES

Entry & Classroom Development

Apprenticeships • Instructional Assistants • Early Educators

Professional Advancement

Coaches • Trainers • Family Support Specialists • Intervention Roles

Leadership & Systems-Level Careers

Program Directors • Licensing Analysts • Researchers • Policy Specialists

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Align high school CTE, community college, and university pathways
- Integrate paid on-the-job learning models
- Expand leadership and coaching roles to retain experienced educators

CALL TO ACTION

Invest in ECE CARE Pathways to strengthen workforce pipelines, increase access to quality care, and build long-term regional resilience.



High School Students (Teens)

ECE CARE PATHWAYS

Start Building Your Future — Right Now.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHILE YOU LEARN

If you enjoy working with children, helping families, or making a positive impact in your community, Early Childhood Education could be your pathway. You can earn experience, college credit, and real job skills while exploring careers that matter.

WHY CONSIDER EARLY EDUCATION?

- You help shape the most important years of a child's life — when 90% of brain development occurs
- You make a difference for families, communities, and the economy
- You gain transferable skills: leadership, communication, problem-solving, creativity, and child development expertise

WHY CONSIDER ECE

- Work with children during the most important years of development
- Build leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills
- Explore careers in education, psychology, health, or business

CAREER PATHWAYS YOU CAN GROW INTO

Entry Roles

Instructional Assistant • Family Child Care Assistant • Youth Mentor

Future Career Options

Teacher • Coach • Child Life Specialist • Family Advocate
Business Owner • Policy Specialist • College Faculty

HOW TO GET STARTED

- High school CTE programs or dual enrollment
- Paid apprenticeship opportunities
- College pathways that lead to leadership careers

CALL TO ACTION

Explore ECE CARE Pathways and discover how you can turn your passion for helping others into a real career.



College Students

ECE CARE PATHWAYS

*Your Degree. Your Direction.
Your Impact.*

BUILD A CAREER THAT GROWS WITH YOU

An Early Childhood Education pathway connects your academic studies with real-world opportunities across education, mental health, family services, research, and public policy. Your degree can open doors far beyond the classroom.

WHY CHOOSE AN ECE PATHWAY

- Transferable leadership and communication skills
- Opportunities in education, health, social services, and consulting
- Clear advancement into coaching, research, or administration

CAREER OPTIONS AFTER GRADUATION

Professional Practice

Teacher • Early Learning Coach • Home Visitor • Intervention Specialist

Leadership & Systems Roles

Program Director • Trainer • Licensing Analyst • Policy Advocate

Academic & Research Paths

College Faculty • Researcher • Higher Education Specialist

PATHWAY TO ADVANCEMENT

Stackable credentials allow progression from AA to BA to advanced degrees, leading to higher-level roles and expanded impact.

CALL TO ACTION

Explore ECE CARE Pathways and discover how your education can shape children's futures – and your own.



Mid-Career Adults & Career Changers

ECE CARE PATHWAYS

*Bring Your Experience. Build
a Purpose-Driven Career.*

A SECOND CAREER WITH REAL IMPACT

Early Childhood Education welcomes professionals from many backgrounds. Leadership, business, healthcare, training, and social services experience can translate directly into meaningful roles that support children, families, and communities.

WHY TRANSITION INTO ECE

- Stable and growing career field
- Opportunities for leadership and entrepreneurship
- Meaningful work that aligns with purpose and community impact

CAREER PATHWAYS THAT MATCH YOUR EXPERIENCE

Business & Leadership

Program Director • Licensed Center Owner • Consultant

Training & Workforce Development

Coach • Trainer • Content Specialist

Health, Family & Community Services

Home Visitor • Family Advocate • Intervention Specialist

Policy & Systems Roles

Licensing Analyst • Public Policy Specialist • Government Advisor

HOW TO GET STARTED

- Accelerated credential pathways
- Apprenticeship and paid training options
- Opportunities to advance into leadership roles quickly

CALL TO ACTION

Explore ECE CARE Pathways and discover how your professional experience can create lasting impact for children and families.

