

ExceleRate® Illinois and Gateways to Opportunity® Credentials

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Licensed Family Child Care - Revised May 2022

ExceleRate Illinois has set standards for Licensed Family Child Care (FCC) Provider, FCC Assistant, and Substitute qualifications at each Circle of Quality that require staff to have Gateways to Opportunity Credentials. Use the FAQ below to navigate and understand the use of Gateways Credentials throughout ExceleRate.

FCC provider, Assistant & Substitute Qualifications for ExceleRate Illinois

1. How are staff defined by ExceleRate Illinois?

For ExceleRate Illinois Standards and Applications the below staff definitions can be used.

- FCC Provider- Family Child Care provider listed on the Illinois Child Care License
- FCC Assistant- Family Child Care assistant required for licensing ratio
- Substitute – An individual meeting Illinois Child Care Licensing requirements who is serving as a replacement for the actual FCC Provider for more than 30 days within a calendar year.

2. Does the family child care provider and staff have to attain a Gateways Credential for ExceleRate eligibility (Standard 4A and 4B)?

Provider and staff as defined in #1 above should continue to apply for and work towards applicable Gateways Credentials. Once his/her application & documentation is reviewed, he/she will receive an eligibility letter from the Credential Department. *Please note: if staff do not have a valid CDA or college coursework, see #4 below.* If not meeting the Gateways Credential requirement for Standard 4A and 4B, the program must submit a detailed Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP), including achievable goals and action steps the staff are making towards meeting the Gateways Credential requirements. This includes actual coursework or applicable training for the Gateways Credential required that the staff person will complete over the next 12 months (prior to next ExceleRate renewal).

Provider and staff should use the eligibility letter they receive from the Gateways Credential Team Member to select coursework from their chosen college/university. Coursework should be selected based on the content areas still needed, as listed in their eligibility letter. If a college/university is already chosen, a Gateways Credential Team Member may be able to suggest coursework to assist with the Gateways Credential attainment. The eligibility letter will list specific training, if applicable.

As additional training/coursework is completed, the individual should notify and submit documentation to the Gateways Credential program to update their individual Credential file. This will generate an updated eligibility letter or the award of a Credential. Either the updated Gateways Credential program eligibility letter or the earned Credential may be used to show evidence of progress as required for ExceleRate eligibility (see #8 below). Individuals can contact the Gateways Credential program directly to check on their progress toward a Gateways Credential by emailing credentials@ilgateways.com.

3. What does not meet requirement of ExceleRate Standard 4A or 4B?

- A CQIP stating “we will apply for credentials” .
- Application to/completing ECE Level 1. While this is good training to have, it is not a relevant Gateways Credential to the requirements of Standard 4A and 4B. Program staff needs to apply for the applicable Gateways Credential(s) listed in 4A/4B.
- Attaining Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) training hours is not relevant to ExceleRate Gateways Credential requirements of 4A and 4B.

4. What if provider and/or staff have no college coursework (or minimal) - should they apply for applicable Credentials?

If provider and/or staff have a valid CDA or any college coursework, they can apply for a Gateways Credential.

If provider and/or staff do not have a valid CDA or any college coursework (as verified on an official transcript), they should not submit a Gateways Credential application. Instead, staff should review the list of entitled colleges/universities at Higher Education Programs - <https://www.ilgateways.com/docman-docs/professional-development/higher-education-programs/entitlement/259-entitled-institutions-list/file>. From there, select a college/university, and an early childhood or child development class. The program would complete their CQIP with the name of the college course and estimated completion date.

If provider and/or staff have a valid CDA or any 100 level or higher college coursework (as verified on an official transcript), they can apply for Gateways Credentials. This coursework would count towards earned semester hours, general college education, and/or early childhood specific education requirements for Gateways Credentials. Once the staff person receives feedback from the Gateways Credential Department, they can follow instruction in #2 to create CQIP.

5. What funding is available to help staff complete college coursework and/or training?

The Gateways Scholarship Program is available for child care professionals interested in advancing their education. Gateways Scholarship Program will pay a portion of tuition for eligible professionals working in early care and education or school-age programs who want to earn college credit, Gateways Credentials, or degrees. The courses you take need to be in early childhood education (ECE) or child development (CD). You can be enrolled in an associate, bachelor's, or master's degree program or taking classes toward a certificate, endorsement, or Gateways Credential. Explore <https://www.ilgateways.com/financial-opportunities/scholarship> to find eligibility requirements, how to apply, and what your responsibilities are if you are awarded a Gateways Scholarship.

Other funding opportunities for early care and education individuals and programs are available at: <https://www.ilgateways.com/index.php/financial-opportunities/additional-funding-programs>

6. Are new staff members (as define in #1) required to have attained a Gateways Credential?

New staff members (meeting the ExceleRate definition of Assistant & Substitute) hired within 90 days of the provider's application to ExceleRate Illinois, are required to have a Gateways Credential application, for the applicable credential in process with Gateways Credential Department. No CQIP is required for these staff members to meet the requirement.

Please Note: It would be good practice for programs to include application to Gateways Credentials as part of a new staff orientation. In the event that turnover within the program occurs, the provider/staff will already know where other staff stand in terms of meeting the applicable Gateways Credential

7. What are the qualifications for family child care provider and staff at each ExceleRate Illinois Circle of Quality?

Silver Circle of Quality

FCC Provider Qualifications

- FCC Provider must have Gateways Family Child Care Credential Level 4 or higher.

FCC Assistants and Substitutes Qualifications

- Any assistant required for licensing ratios must have a Gateways ECE Credential Level 1 or higher OR a Gateways Family Child Care (FCC) Credential Level 2 or higher, OR Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential.
- Any substitute must have either a valid Gateways ECE Credential Level 2 or higher OR valid Gateways FCC Credential Level 2 or higher OR valid CDA.

Gold Circle of Quality

FCC Provider Qualifications

- FCC Provider must hold a BA/BS degree or higher and a Gateways Family Child Care Credential Level 5.

FCC Assistants and Substitutes Qualifications

- Any assistant required for licensing ratios must have a Gateways ECE Credential Level 2 or higher OR Gateways FCC Credential Level 2 or higher.
- Any substitute must have a Gateways ECE Credential Level 3 or higher OR Gateways FCC Credential Level 3 or higher.

8. How is progress toward a Gateways Credential determined?

Standard 4A & 4B evidence at Silver and Gold:

- Family Child Care (FCC) Provider (and Assistant/Substitute if applicable) must hold the applicable Credential listed in #7 above or have a pending FCC Credential application on file. If the applicable Gateways Credential has not been earned, the Provider must write a CQIP, using the eligibility letter received from the Gateways Credential program, to outline goals and action steps needed to earn the applicable Gateways Credential. Updated CQIP of detailed accomplishments towards the needed Gateways Credential will be required yearly and progress must be shown. Evidence of progress will include either an updated letter from the Gateways Credential Team program outlining what items still need to be met or an earned Gateways Credential.
- CQIP is not accepted in lieu of a BA/BS degree required at Gold for 4A.

9. How can I learn more, or get further assistance related to Gateways Credentials?

If a fcc provider has a general question about a Gateways Credential, they can email credentials@ilgateways.com or call 866-697-8278.

Once an application is submitted and reviewed by the Gateways Credential Team, an email will be sent to the applicant that includes the contact information for their Gateways Credential Team member. If there are questions about whether a specific training/coursework will count towards the Gateways Credential needed, contact can be made with that specific Gateways Credential Team member.

Gateways Credential Team members respond to inquiries in order received. An immediate response to email/call may be slightly delayed, but a timely response will occur. We want to emphasize the need for provider and/or staff to apply for the applicable Gateways Credentials well in advance of the program's ExceleRate renewal month.

**CCR&R Quality and Infant Toddler Specialists cannot provide technical assistance related to Gateways Credentials. They are available to assist with other ExceleRate items- ERS, BAS, self-assessment, policy review, etc.*

If a program has a question specific to Credential requirements as it pertains to ExceleRate eligibility, please call (866) 697-8278 and ask to speak with an ExceleRate Specialist, or email your questions to info@excelerateillinois.com.



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