
Early Learning & Human Services Committee

HB 1648

Brief Description: Modifying child care provider qualifications.

Sponsors: Representatives Dent, Eslick, Burnett, Penner, Jacobsen and Graham.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to implement the community-based pathway by August 1, 2025, and to make it available in an online format.
- Extends the timeline for child care providers to complete staff qualification requirements to at least August 1, 2035, or until at least 10 years following the full implementation of all components of the community-based training pathway, whichever is later.
- Allows child care providers who are hired for the first time after August 1, 2033, a minimum of 10 years from the date of hire to meet the requisite staff qualification requirements.
- Provides that a cumulative three years of work experience in licensed child care qualifies as a demonstration of experience-based competency in fulfillment of staff qualification requirements, and prohibits the DCYF from requiring providers to have completed annual in-service trainings in order to demonstrate experience-based competency.

Hearing Date: 2/4/25

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) regulates child care entities. The DCYF has adopted core competencies for child care providers that describe the standards of knowledge and skills required to provide quality care and education to children and their families. The DCYF licensing requirements related to staff qualifications generally require child care providers to earn educational credentials to demonstrate their knowledge of core competencies. However, providers in certain roles may alternatively fulfill staff qualification requirements through the legislatively directed community-based training pathway or the experience-based competency pathway created in agency rules.

Additionally, providers with at least 12 months of cumulative employment must complete 10 hours of annual in-service training. There are several options for in-service training, including completion of college coursework related to core competencies.

Provider Education Requirements.

Child care providers must meet certain education requirements or the equivalent by August 1, 2026, or within five years of the provider's date of hire if hired after August 1, 2019. Providers serving the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) must meet education requirements at the time of hire. Education requirements include earning an initial, short, or state Early Childhood Education (ECE) certificate for most positions, which requires completion of college credits in core competency areas. To earn an initial ECE certificate requires 12 college credits; the short ECE certificate requires 20 credits (the initial certificate plus eight additional credits); and the state ECE certificate requires 47 credits (the short certificate plus 27 additional credits). There are additional in-service professional development requirements for continuing education delivered or approved by the DCYF to maintain staff standards and qualifications while employed as a child care provider.

Community-Based Training Pathway.

Legislation enacted in 2021 required the DCYF to create a noncredit-bearing, community-based training pathway for licensed child care providers to meet professional education requirements as an alternative to ECE credentials. The community-based training pathway must align with early learning core competencies, include culturally relevant practices, and be made available: (1) at low cost to providers, not to exceed \$250 per person; (2) in multiple languages; and (3) in an accessible manner for providers in rural and urban settings. The DCYF implemented the community-based training pathway in 2022 as the Provider Access to a Community Equivalent program (PACE). The PACE alternative requires the following instruction: (1) 30 hours in child care basics; (2) 20 hours in enhancing the quality of early learning; (3) 40 hours of additional in-service training; and (4) 30 hours of on-the-job learning. Part 1 and Part 2 of the PACE alternative are currently available and offer an equivalent to the ECE initial certificate. Additional components that will offer an equivalent to the ECE short certificate are still under development.

Experience-Based Competency Pathway.

Rules adopted by the DCYF offer a third pathway to meet staff qualification requirements. Child care providers in specified roles who have a cumulative seven years of experience and meet other criteria are able to meet licensing requirements without ECE certification. To fulfill requirements through this option, a provider must have all of the following:

- seven years of cumulative experience working in a licensed facility by August 1, 2026;
- maintained compliance with all health and safety trainings and child care basics trainings; and
- active employment in a qualifying job role. For family home providers, qualifying roles are licensee, lead teacher, or assistant teacher; for child care centers, qualifying roles are center lead teacher or assistant teacher.

There are certain provider roles requiring an ECE state certificate that may not fulfill staff qualification requirements through experience-based competency or the community-based training pathway, including center directors, assistant directors, and program supervisors. The alternative pathways are also not an option for providers serving the ECEAP program.

Summary of Bill:

The community-based training pathway must be implemented by August 1, 2025, and must be made available in an online format.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) must allow licensed child care providers until at least August 1, 2035, or until at least 10 years following the full implementation of all components of the community-based training pathway, whichever is later, to complete any of the following in fulfillment of staff qualification requirements: (1) Early Childhood Education (ECE) credential requirements; (2) the community-based training pathway; or (3) the experience-based competency demonstration with a cumulative three years of experience working in a licensed child care. The DCYF may not require licensed child care providers to complete annual in-service training requirements in order to complete experience-based competency.

After August 1, 2033, the DCYF must allow all child care providers who are hired for the first time into a role requiring an initial, short, or state ECE certificate a minimum of 10 years from the date of hire to meet staff qualification requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.