

Gateways to Opportunity® Credentials

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Gateways to Opportunity Credentials: The Basics

What is a Gateways Credential?

Gateways Credentials are professional achievements that validate knowledge, skills, and experience in the following areas: early care and education, infants and toddlers, school-age and youth, administration, family child care, and/or family engagement. Gateways Credentials are for individuals who live and/or work in Illinois. View Gateways Credentials at www.ilgateways.com for an online overview.

How and why were Gateways to Opportunity Credentials developed?

Gateways Credentials were created by practitioners, providers, and key stakeholders to support and recognize progressive levels of knowledge and skills for early care and education, infants and toddlers, school-age and youth, administration, family child care, and/or family engagement professionals. Specific competencies in the Gateways Content Areas are used to validate the knowledge professionals must have to provide high quality care and services.

What Gateways Credentials are available to professionals?

Gateways Credentials are awarded and recognized by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and were signed into legislation in July 2009. Gateways offers multiple Credentials to professionals in Illinois at various levels depending on education and experience:

- ECE Credential
- Illinois Director Credential (IDC)
- Infant-Toddler Credential (ITC)
- Family Child Care Credential (FCC)
- Family Specialist Credential (FSC)
- School-Age and Youth Development Credential (SAYD)
- Technical Assistance Credential (TA)
- ESL and Bilingual Credential

Gateways Credentials Validate Specific Skills and Knowledge

Why do I need a Gateways Credential?

Many professionals have significant experience, yet scientific knowledge about child development has advanced rapidly in the last several years. Much more is known today about children's brain development and the most effective approaches for working with young children, school-age and youth, and families. Gateways Credentials ensure there is a standard and consistent level of knowledge for professionals. Each Gateways Credential has components that include coursework and/or training, as well as work and practical experience.

Why is it important for professionals in Illinois to have Gateways Credentials?

Working with children, youth, and families requires specific knowledge and skillsets in order to provide high quality programs and services. Credentials validate that an individual has attained the knowledge and skills necessary to practice his or her profession. Some employers give priority when hiring to professionals who have earned Credentials. Gateways Credentials are embedded into the ExceleRate® Illinois Circles of Quality and may gain extra points in the Request for Proposal (RFP) process for Preschool for All grants.

Eligibility and Selecting a Gateways Credential

How do I determine which Gateways Credential is right for me?

Your professional goals will help to inform which Credential can move you forward on your career journey. Previous and current roles and employment pathways may guide you to seek specific Credentials. Education and training, and areas of interest to you, will help you decide whether you are interested in the field, wish to specifically work with infants and toddlers, in administration, with school-age and youth, or with families. This information will help you determine which Credential is right for you.

How do I know if I'm eligible for a Gateways Credential?

Credential requirements are listed on the Gateways website at www.ilgateways.com. Once you have reviewed these requirements, download the Gateways Registry Membership Form and appropriate Credential Supplement Application. After your application is submitted and reviewed, you will be contacted regarding your eligibility. You may have already met all Credential requirements, or you may need to take additional trainings and/or coursework to fill in any gaps in your education. A Credentials counselor will assist you throughout this process.

How do I know if my degree, coursework, and/or training apply to a Gateways Credential?

After you have applied and submitted your official transcripts from an accredited college or university for review, you will be notified regarding the next steps in the process. You have three years from the date your application is received to complete the Credential requirements (effective FY21). Many individuals are closer to reaching their desired Credential than they realize!

How can I keep track of my Gateways Credentials when, or if, I change jobs?

Your Credentials are specific to you and are verified within the Gateways Registry. Even if you leave a place of employment, your Registry membership and any Gateways Credentials you have earned stay with you. These are your Credentials throughout your career and can be added to or advanced as you wish. Please see the *Renewal and Level Advancement FAQ* page for more information.

When can I expect to receive my Gateways Credential(s)?

Once all information has been provided to Gateways and the Credential components have been met, anticipate receiving your Credential within 30 days.

Support & Assistance

What support is available for professionals as they go through the Gateways Credential process?

Once you have decided which Credential is right for you, a Gateways Credentials Counselor is available to answer questions and help you identify gaps that may need to be filled to attain the Credential.

What scholarships are available?

The Gateways Scholarship Program is an individual-based scholarship opportunity for eligible practitioners working in early care and education or school-age care programs for individuals who qualify. The Gateways Scholarship Program will pay a percentage of tuition and fees based on availability of funding. The Scholarship Program enables practitioners to continue education in Early Childhood Education and to earn degrees, Gateways Credentials, certificates, and endorsements.

APPLY TODAY FOR YOUR GATEWAYS CREDENTIALS! IT IS AS EASY AS 1—2—3!

1. Become a Gateways Registry member
2. Select the Credential that is right for you and **Apply online** OR download and mail in the Gateways Credential application to: INCCRRA 1226 Towanda Plaza, Bloomington, IL 61701
3. Send in the required Credential fee (*if applicable*) and your official transcripts



GATEWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY®
Illinois Professional Development System



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