

Utah's Early Childhood Education

Career Ladder Instructor Competencies



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Career Ladder Instructor Introduction

Utah's Career Ladder professional development system, including the approval of Instructors, is overseen by the Department of Workforces Services (DWS) Office of Child Care (OCC) and maintained by the Utah Registry for Professional Development (URPD) at Utah State University. The Approved Instructors teach Career Ladder courses to participants to equip them to care for children. Career Ladder courses include topics such as early childhood health, safety, environments and development, as well as how to work with families and other early childhood professionals.



Requirements

Career Ladder Instructors may be qualified to teach Basic, Advanced or Specialty courses depending on their education and experience. The types correspond to the requirements needed to teach specific Career Ladder courses (levels 1-8). Instructors teach at the levels that best match their educational background, paid professional experience working with children and experience with the professional development of adults.

Basic Level Instructor

Basic Level Instructors may teach Career Ladder courses levels 1-3 and must meet the following requirements:

- Current Child Development Associate (CDA) or Certified Childcare Professional (CCP) credential
- At least six years paid professional experience working with children
- At least six months of direct responsibility for the professional development of adults and demonstrated knowledge of adult learning and instruction

Advanced Level Instructor*

Advanced Level Instructors may teach most Career Ladder courses levels (1-8) and must meet the following requirements:

- Level 9 or higher on the Utah's Career Ladder (Associate degree or higher with Career Ladder Level 8 or 15 early childhood college credits)
- At least two years paid professional experience working directly with children
- At least six months experience with direct responsibility for professional development of adults and demonstrated knowledge of adult learning and instruction
- An Infant Development — Birth to Three Years college course or current Infant and Toddler CDA is required to teach the Infant and Toddler Endorsement courses.

**Certain Advanced Level courses may also have additional requirements.*

Specialty Instructor

Specialty Instructors may teach in their field of expertise and must meet the requirements listed below:

- Current license, certificate or bachelor's degree in a specified field outside of early care and youth education
- At least two years of experience related to the specialty area

Conditional Instructor Approval

There are several ways to meet the Instructor requirements if the traditional requirements are not met:

1. If most but not all Instructor requirements are met, Instructors may be able to teach on a conditional status. It will be the responsibility of the host training agency to complete a conditional approval plan indicating needed courses. If an Instructor does not complete the requirements outlined in the plan within the approved time line, the Instructor may lose their approval status.



Maintaining Career Ladder Instructor Status

In order to maintain approval status Instructors must:

- Teach at least one Career Ladder course within three years of each hire date
- Maintain current certification or credentials, if applicable
- Complete annual professional development requirements required by host training agency
- Be observed on a schedule as required by host training agency

University or college faculty members are exempt from ongoing professional development hours, but will have observations. Specialty Instructors are also exempt from professional development hours but must maintain a current certification and participate in observations.

The ultimate responsibility and authority to enforce the core competencies rests with individual agencies and associations who employ Career Ladder Instructors.



Career Ladder Instructor Core Competencies

Quality in early childhood programs depends in large part on the education and ongoing instruction of its teachers. Instructor core competencies ensure that Instructors provide quality instruction focused on the needs of the early care and education workforce and the goals of their programs. Career Ladder Instructors promote the reliability and validity of instruction statewide. They also help participants move along a pathway of professional development, through meaningful learning experiences, which ultimately translate to positive outcomes for children and families.

There are four core competencies that Career Ladder Instructors are expected to understand and follow:

- Professionalism
- Knowledge of Learning Environment Protocols
- Knowledge of Early Childhood Subject Matter
- Effective Instructor Abilities

Professionalism

Professionalism is using skills and good judgment, and behaving as trained and expected in the workplace.

Creates a professional atmosphere:

- Instructor will conduct themselves before, during and after a class in a professional and respectful manner.
- Instructor will exercise integrity, honesty and diligence in carrying out his/her duties and responsibilities.
- Instructor will be sensitive to the diverse audiences they teach and will recognize that each person brings their own expectations of learning.
- Instructor will allow all participants to attend courses they are registered for regardless of race, color, sexual orientation, national origin, age, gender, veteran status, religion or disability.

Dresses professionally:

- Instructor will wear business casual attire such as slacks, a nice shirt or sweater and dress shoes. Inappropriate attire such as jeans with holes, t-shirts with inappropriate logos, exposed mid-drifts, tank tops, low cut clothing, mini-skirts, cut-offs, pajamas, scrubs, or flip flops are not acceptable.



Ensures that no interactions may be considered a conflict of interest:

- Instructor will use the class time to teach the topic. Topics to avoid include discussing employment opportunities or selling products that an Instructor has a financial interest in.
- Personal business between the Instructor and the participants should be conducted outside of class time. Class time encompasses preparation, instruction, clean-up and any time spent providing technical assistance as a Career Ladder Instructor.

Ensures that all products, individuals and institutions are treated equally:

- Instructor will remain neutral if discussions about products or institutions occur in their class setting (e.g. an Early Childhood materials vendor or a university).
- Instructor will be respectful of all types of child care and address all types during class discussions. Avoid language that favors one form of care over another (e.g. family or center).
- Instructor will avoid any language that would be considered discriminative, belittling or derogatory to any one group or individual.
- Instructor will refrain from conduct or actions that detract from the reputation of the URPD and other professional early childhood education organizations.

Maintains confidentiality:

- All issues that are discussed while in the role as Career Ladder Instructor are to remain confidential and only discussed with the proper agency representatives, if necessary.
- Confidential information obtained during the course of a class should not be used for personal gain or in a manner that would be detrimental to any party.

Maintains integrity of the educational materials:

- All Career Ladder coursework is approved through OCC. The Instructor is responsible to teach courses as outlined by OCC. It is permissible for an Instructor to make minor changes to course activities due to circumstances with a particular group of participants.
- Instructor may submit suggestions for changes to the curriculum to their organization or agency representative for approval. Instructors must obtain permission from OCC before adding materials to the curriculum that will change course content.
- All Career Ladder Instructors are approved through OCC and only Career Ladder approved Instructors may teach the Career Ladder courses. Instructors who are unable to teach a scheduled class must contact the organization or agency representative to find a replacement.

Maintains scheduled class times:

- Instructor will teach the class in the time frames outlined in the curriculum guide

for each course. Successful completion of a Career Ladder course is determined by class attendance. For this reason, it is imperative that each Career Ladder course session be held for the entire class period.

- Documentation of Career Ladder course attendance is required. The Instructor is responsible to ensure that every participant signs the attendance sheets at the beginning of each course session.

For live, virtual courses, the Instructor is responsible for ensuring that a screenshot is taken to verify attendance.

- Career Ladder credit will only be issued to those participants who are on time and present during the entire class.
- The Instructor will start and end each course on time, and ensure that each session has a 10 minute break for every 2 hours in coursework. Courses cannot start early in order to end early, nor can a break be skipped to allow for the early release of participants.



Knowledge of Learning Environment Protocols

Instructors prepare the learning environment and the learners for trainings, and are expected to create supportive environments that are conducive to teaching and encourage learning. **For live, virtual courses, Instructors will follow their host training agency's procedures regarding digital learning platform settings.**

Arrives promptly to the setting:

- Instructor will arrive at least 15 to 30 minutes before participants are scheduled to arrive in order to prepare and greet participants as they arrive.

Makes every effort to ensure that the class begins and ends on time:

- Instructor will be aware of time, be respectful of those that arrived on time and begin class at the correct time. Starting class with a review or a “getting to know you” activity allows for starting on-time while waiting a few extra minutes to begin instructional content.
- Instructor will also be aware of the length of break times and end class when the designated class time is up. Never ask a participant to leave because they are late. Talk to them privately if they are too late to receive Career Ladder course credit.

Reviews the Professional Development System Code of Conduct:

- Instructor will take a moment at the beginning of each course to remind the participants about conduct guidelines. Be thorough, and set clear expectations.

Follows established policies and procedures related to confidentiality:

- Instructor will talk specifically about the importance of confidentiality of the children, families and staff that they work with at the beginning of every class and remind participants as needed.
- Instructor will maintain confidentiality when telling personal anecdotal stories.

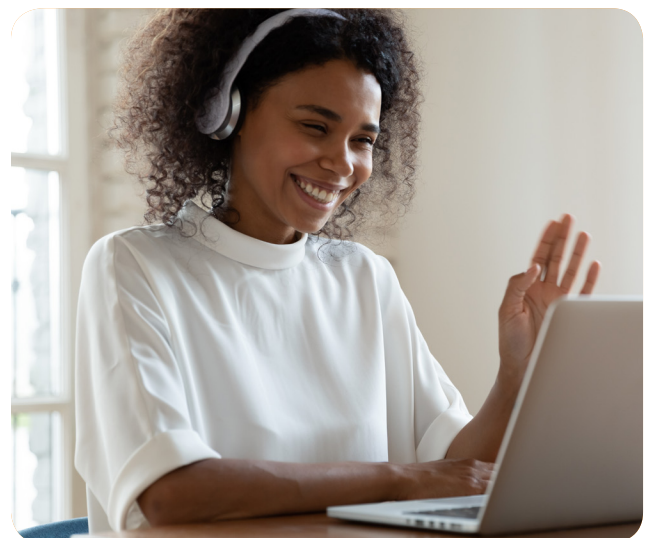
- If a difficult topic is discussed within the class, remind the participants about the importance of group confidentiality.

Be respectful of all employees of OCC, CAC, URPD, Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and the Bureau of Child Care Licensing:

- Instructor will introduce guests from these agencies who visit the class.
- Instructor will support the aforementioned agencies and their role in the child care community.
- If an issue does arise, the Instructor is responsible to support the agency or individual, and to steer the discussion back to the subject.

Orients participants to the lesson:

- Instructor will give a brief overview of the schedule such as planned break times.
- Instructor will review the course objectives prior to beginning instruction.



Knowledge of Subject Matter

Instructors must have knowledge of subject matter or understand and be able to communicate the course curriculum, as well as have an awareness of general developmentally appropriate early childhood practices.

Be familiar with the course and content:

- Instructor will become acquainted with the content of the curriculum and ensure that all of the materials are ready for the class.
- Instructor will have previewed any videos, media files, PowerPoint or web links to ensure that they are knowledgeable about content, and confident in execution of the technology.
- Instructor will use the curriculum guide as a reference only and not read the curriculum word for word.

Demonstrates a broad and deep knowledge of the content being taught:

- Instructor has a comprehensive knowledge of the particular subject that they are teaching, is competent and comfortable delivering the content of the curriculum, and is able to help the participants gain an understanding.

Understands principles and patterns of child growth and development:

- Instructor will have a comprehensive knowledge of the ages and stages of child development and typical behavior for various age groups so they can lead discussions, answer questions and correct participants as needed.

Understands developmentally appropriate practices:

- Instructor knows, supports, and can give examples of developmentally appropriate practices for all ages of children.
- Instructor is knowledgeable about the theories of practice (e.g. Piaget, Erikson or Vygotsky) and can apply that knowledge to the subject being taught.

- Instructor has knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate guidance techniques and has the ability to give multiple examples of appropriate techniques for situations that participants refer to during class during class.

Instructs and demonstrates the relevance of the subject matter to the child care profession:

- Instructor will teach and demonstrate the importance of the course content in the everyday work participants do with children.

Understands many early childhood professionals are responsible to follow Child Care Licensing rules and regulations:

- Instructor has a working knowledge of current Child Care Licensing rules and regulations and refers participants directly to Child Care Licensing with questions regarding the content and material covered in the courses they teach.

Understands that there are many different types of early child care professionals and is able to speak to the needs of each type of early childhood professional:

- Instructor has basic knowledge of various early childhood settings (e.g. center care, family care, Head Start and preschool) and is able to adapt subject material to support all types of professionals.



Effective Instructor Abilities

Career Ladder Instructors must have effective Instructor abilities, or knowledge and skills for teaching adult learners. Early Childhood Career Ladder Instructors are expected to effectively deliver content that supports practical application and meets the needs of the group for both in-person and virtual learning environments.

Speaks clearly, correctly and coherently:

- Instructor will project their voice without being abrasive, and will use a positive tone.
- Instructor will use vocabulary that is both easy for the participants to understand and educational.

Writes clearly, correctly and coherently:

- For in-person courses, the Instructor will use a dark marker that writes well.
- Instructor will spell correctly and write large enough for participants in the back of the room to see.
- Instructor will make sure that the material that they write supports the lesson in an understandable way.

Maintains professional boundaries:

- Instructor will introduce themselves and the name of the course at the beginning of class.
- Instructor will be friendly and approachable without sharing too much personal information or asking participants to share too much information.
- Instructor will help maintain these expectations and boundaries between participants.

Models enthusiasm for content:

- Instructor will reiterate the importance of course content and their investment in both the teaching process and the information being taught as participants arrive, during the introduction and through the class.

Makes appropriate, sound, fair and logical decisions:

- Instructor will use their best judgment to determine participation credit for participants based on the Professional Development System Code of Conduct and individual situations (e.g. if the freeway is closed or the weather is bad, allowing a few extra minutes before starting).
- If the participants need a break earlier than scheduled, the Instructor will accommodate that.
- If all of the class objectives have been met and there are no questions, the Instructor will end the class a few minutes early instead of having them do busy work to take up the time (not to exceed 15 minutes).

Demonstrates an understanding of pedagogical practices regarding adult learning styles:

- Instructor recognizes that adults learn in a variety of ways (i.e. audio, visual and kinesthetic) and that they need to use all of these styles in order to maximize the learning experience for the participants.
- Instructor will facilitate learning and processing in large groups, small groups and individually.
- Instructor recognizes the need to accommodate each class accordingly.

Creates a learning environment that is physically, socially and emotionally safe and supportive within the limitations of the facility or digital learning platform:

- Instructor will do everything to maximize a comfortable adult learning environment at the facility, making adaptations as needed (e.g. adult tables and chairs, adequate lighting and comfortable temperature).
- For in-person classes, Instructor will inform participants about locations for restrooms, parking and exits.

For live, virtual courses, Instructor will make reasonable accommodations for participants to be off-camera for brief time frames if needed for bathroom breaks.

- Instructor will create an atmosphere of respectful learning where participants feel free to share ideas without fear of belittlement from the Instructor or other participants.
- Instructor will assure that the examples and discussions demonstrate sensitivity and respect to other cultures and beliefs and initiate activities or discussions that help participants overcome stereotyping and bias.

Expects on-task, engaged behavior from participants:

- Instructor will be aware of the behavior of participants and acknowledge appropriate participation.
- Instructor will modify situations to ensure the criteria are met. This includes enforcing a respectful learning environment and an environment conducive to learning (e.g. no sidebar conversations, text messaging or sleeping).



- Instructor will move around the room as needed, especially during small group time, to ensure that discussions are on topic and relevant to classwork.

For live, virtual courses, the Instructor will “drop in” to each virtual breakout room for this same purpose.

Attempts to engage participants and sustain their interest throughout the session and gives high expectations for participant involvement and achievement:

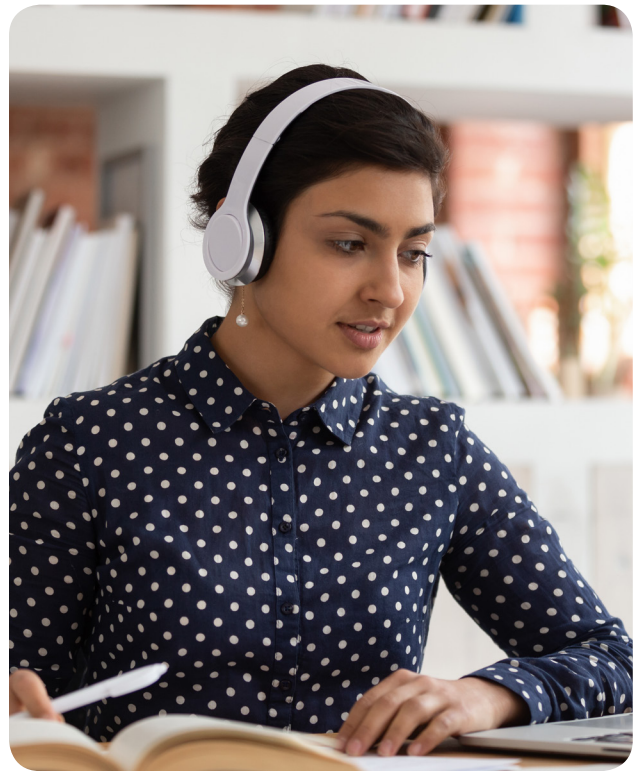
- Instructor will use a variety of techniques to engage participation throughout the session and make adjustments to group activities as needed (e.g. changing plans if a group is more interested in processing, or interactive learning such as sharing of ideas).
- Instructor will be aware of the group and ensure that everyone is actively participating at their individual comfort level.

Demonstrates respect for others:

- Instructor will listen attentively to what the participants have to say, listen to any questions they have and display a positive attitude in verbal and non-verbal communications.
- Instructor will be aware of the visuals, graphics, gestures and other appropriate communication modifications to accommodate English Language Learners (ELL). The Instructor will also make every effort to get written material or translation for ELL participants when possible by contacting their training coordinator to see if resources are available.

Implements effective transitions between instructional activities and conducts the class at an appropriate pace:

- Instructor will have the materials for the class prepared before participants arrive, and distributed to participant seats if applicable, in order to facilitate smooth transitions



(e.g. have the media files downloaded and open, the presentation cued, the handouts distributed, and for in-person courses, have the Instructor information written on the board).

- Instructor will let the participants know, clearly and ahead of time, the time frame and expectations when they are moving from large group to discussion or performing a demonstration.
- Instructors will give prompts to wrap up discussions during small group time.

Uses evaluation techniques to assess participants understanding of content and concepts:

- Instructor will ask open-ended questions, use problem solving techniques, use anecdotes that stimulate curiosity, recognize both independent and consensus comments, and encourage participants to come up with answers on their own.
- Instructor will review information that participants have learned in previous



classwork or with their work with children in child care settings.

- Instructor will do a periodic check for participant understanding and repeat a concept, expand upon a concept or move to the next concept as needed.

Identifies confusion and misconceptions as indicated by participant responses:

- Instructor will respectfully take the time to clarify anything that the participants do not understand from the course content.
- Instructor will remind participants of best practice if participants ask or state something that is not best for children.
- If a question arises that the Instructor is not able to answer the Instructor will say, “that is a great question—I will check into it and get back to you,” and then follow through.
- If questions about Child Care Licensing arise, the Instructor may refer to the rules but should never make suggestions or interpretations, and should direct participants to contact their licensor or another licensing staff member.

Demonstrates openness to participant’s challenges regarding information and ideas:

- Instructor will calmly and respectfully listen to and redirect any misconceptions that come up regarding developmentally appropriate information or Code of Conduct issues.
- If participants are challenging or share incorrect information, the Instructor will not be demeaning in any way but instead, validate the participants’ points-of-view and feelings while correcting the situation.

Encourages attitudes of tolerance and helpfulness among participants:

- Instructor will recognize the participants as content area experts and encourage them to share information related to the topic that will enhance the class.
- Instructor will bring the expertise of the participants and their diverse backgrounds into the classroom in a positive way and encourage them to share and support the curriculum content.
- Instructor will encourage all of the participants to be supportive and respectful

of each other's differences as they participate in the learning process.

- Instructor will create a spirit of classroom community by inviting participants to help the Instructor and each other during the course of classroom routines.

Allow adequate time for participants to respond to questions or give comments:

- Instructor will pause a few seconds after asking a question to allow the participants time to process the answer.

For live, virtual courses, some additional time may be needed for participants to unmute their microphones. If the participants are unable to answer, the Instructor should rephrase the question.

- Instructor will use open-ended questions whenever possible to encourage an atmosphere of creative thinking.
- If comments lead to a valuable discussion that the entire class is involved in, the Instructor will arrange the class time to accommodate both the discussion and the course objectives.



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