

ExceleRate® Illinois and Gateways to Opportunity® Credentials

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Licensed Family Child Care

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 DCFS license
- FCC Assistant- Family Child Care assistant required for licensing ratio
- Substitute – An individual meeting DCFS 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. If not meeting the Credential requirement for Standard 4A and 4B, the provider must submit a detailed Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP), including achievable goals and action steps the provider/staff are making towards meeting the Credential requirements. This includes actual coursework or applicable training for the Credential required that the individual 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 program 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, Gateways Credential program may be able to suggest coursework to assist with 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 #5 below). Individuals can contact the Gateways Credential program directly to check on their progress by emailing credentials@ilgateways.com.

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

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

4. 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.

5. How is progress toward a 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 #4 above or have a pending FCC Credential application on file. If the applicable 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 Credential. Updated CQIP of detailed accomplishments towards the needed Credential will be required yearly and progress must be shown. Evidence of progress will include either an updated letter from the Gateways Credential program outlining what items still need to be met or an earned Credential.
- CQIP is not accepted in lieu of a BA/BS degree required at Gold for 4A.

6. How can I learn more or get further assistance related to ExceleRate eligibility?

Call toll-free (866) 697-8278 and ask to speak with a ExceleRate Specialist. You can also email info@exceletrateillinois.com.



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