Child and Youth Programs (CYP)
Career Growth Guide

Education, Leadership, and Career Opportunities

The CYP Career Growth Guide is a companion to the CYP Career Roadmap. The Career Roadmap helps professionals understand how to progress from Entry Level through Target Level Program Assistant positions. This guide looks beyond that foundation and highlights the many ways professionals can continue to grow within CYP.

Whether your goal is to lead a classroom, train and mentor others, manage a program, or oversee multiple CYP operations, this guide can help you explore the possibilities. It explains career paths in plain language and outlines the education, credentials, and experience that may help prepare you for future opportunities.

This guide is designed to help professionals explore career possibilities. It is not intended to establish position qualifications or guarantee advancement opportunities.

Use this guide to discover what's possible, build a plan for your future, and start conversations with your supervisor, Training and Curriculum staff, or leadership team about your career goals.

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Career Growth at a Glance

CYP career growth can begin with the Program Assistant role and grow in many directions.

Program Assistant Levels
↓
Entry Level (GSE-02)
↓
Intermediate Level (GSE-04)
↓
Target Level (GSE-06)
↓
Leader Level (GSE-07)
Explore Additional CYP Opportunities: Lead Educator |Training and Curriculum | Family Child Care Program Operations | Program Leadership

Building Your Foundation

Most CYP professionals begin as Program Assistants. Building a strong foundation on CYP includes training, experience, and growth across Program Assistant levels. The information below highlights key parts of that foundation.

- Entry Level (GSE-02)
- Intermediate Level (GSE-04)
- Target Level (GSE-06)
- Leader Level (GSE-07)
- Orientation Training
- Foundation Training
- Virtual Lab School (VLS)
- Hands-on Experience
- Coaching and feedback from supervisors and Training and Curriculum staff

Education and Professional Development

Education and training can help professionals prepare for future opportunities in CYP. Some positions need specific education, credentials, or experience. The table below explains why each milestone matters.

Education or Credential	What It Means	May Help Prepare You For
Child Development Associate (CDA)	A national credential for early childhood staff.	Lead Educator, Training and Curriculum roles, and other leadership opportunities.
Military School-Age Credential	A credential for staff who work with school-age children.	School-age leadership roles, Training and Curriculum roles, and other leadership opportunities.
6 Semester Hours	College classes related to children, youth, or education.	Intermediate Level positions.
24 Semester Hours	More college classes related to children, youth, or education.	Target Level and Leader Level positions and opportunities such as Lead Educator, Training and Curriculum, Assistant Director, and Director roles.
Associate Degree	A two-year college degree.	Leadership and management opportunities.
Bachelor's Degree	A four-year college degree.	Advanced leadership and administrative opportunities.

Education is one part of career growth. Position requirements, experience, vacancies, and other factors may vary by installation and position.

Helpful reminder: College classes should be related to the age group or program area where the professional works, such as early childhood education, child development, youth development, elementary education, secondary education, or a related field.

Building Leadership Experience - Lead Educator

Lead Educator is one example of a leadership opportunity available within CYP. This role helps professionals build leadership, coaching, and supervisory skills while staying connected to daily care and learning.

What Lead Educators Do

- Lead classroom teams or activity areas.
- Coach and support CYP staff.
- Help train new professionals.
- Support quality care and learning.
- Serve as a link between staff and program leadership.
- May serve as Manager on Duty when assigned.

Education and Experience That Help

- Experience working with children and youth.
- CDA or Military School-Age Credential.
- 24 college credit hours related to children, youth, or education.
- Associate or bachelor's degree.
- Leadership, coaching, or mentoring experience.

Why Professionals May Enjoy This Role

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy leading a team, helping staff grow, and supporting children and youth every day.

Training and Curriculum Career Path

Some professionals discover they enjoy helping others learn. They may enjoy teaching, coaching, mentoring, and helping staff complete required training. These interests can lead to Training and Curriculum roles.

Assistant Training Specialist

What they do:

- Supports training activities.
- Helps staff complete training.
- Assists with training records and learning activities.

Education and experience that help:

- Experience working in CYP.
- Strong communication skills.
- Interest in training and coaching others.

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy helping professionals learn and complete training.

Training and Curriculum Specialist

What they do:

- Trains CYP professionals.
- Coaches and mentors staff.
- Supports VLS and other required training.
- Helps staff use curriculum and best practices.

Education and experience that help:

- Experience working in CYP.
- 24 college credit hours related to children, youth, or education.
- Training, coaching, or mentoring experience.
- CDA, Military School-Age Credential, associate or bachelor's degree.

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy teaching, coaching, and helping others grow.

Training and Curriculum Supervisor

What they do:

- Leads training programs.
- Supports Training and Curriculum staff.

- Helps plan staff training.
- Supports credentials, college classes, and staff growth.

Education and experience that help:

- Training and Curriculum experience.
- Leadership experience.
- College coursework or degree related to children, youth, education, or training.
- Experience training adult learners.

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy leading training programs and supporting professional growth.

Family Child Care Career Path

Some professionals enjoy supporting families and Family Child Care providers. These professionals often enjoy building relationships, helping providers succeed, and supporting safe, quality care in home settings.

FCC Monitor

What they do:

- Supports FCC providers.
- Visits and reviews FCC homes.
- Helps providers meet and maintain program standards.
- Helps with training and support.

Education and experience that help:

- CDA, Military School-Age Credential, or related education.
- Experience working with children or youth.
- Knowledge of Family Child Care programs.
- Strong communication skills.

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy working with providers and supporting families.

FCC Director

What they do:

- Leads FCC operations.
- Supports FCC provider recruitment and retention.
- Works with FCC Monitors and providers.
- Helps maintain program quality.

Education and experience that help:

- Leadership experience.
- FCC program knowledge.
- 24 college credit hours or degree in a related field.
- Experience working with children, youth, or family programs.

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy leading Family Child Care programs and helping providers succeed.

Program Operations Career Path

Professionals who enjoy leading teams, managing daily work, and helping programs run well may be interested in Program Operations roles. These roles support staff, families, facilities, budgets, schedules, and program quality.

Assistant Director

What they do:

- Helps manage daily program operations.
- Supports staffing and schedules.
- Assists with budgets and resources.
- Supports family communication and customer service.
- Helps ensure the program meets CYP standards.

Education and experience that help:

- Experience working in CYP.
- Leadership experience.
- 24 college credit hours related to children, youth, or education.
- Associate or bachelor's degree.
- Experience with schedules, staff support, or program operations.

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy leading teams, solving problems, and helping a program run well.

Child Development Center (CDC) Director

What they do:

- Leads a Child Development Center.
- Supports staff and families.
- Manages program operations.
- Helps plan budgets and resources.
- Supports quality care for children.

Education and experience that help:

- Director positions include education and experience requirements related to children, youth, leadership, and program management.
- Bachelor's degree in a related field.
- Leadership and management experience.

- Experience with program quality, staffing, and family support.

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy leading a program and supporting young children and families.

School Age Care (SAC) Director

What they do:

- Leads a School Age Care program.
- Supports staff and families.
- Manages daily operations.
- Helps support school-age learning, care, and activities.

Education and experience that help:

- Experience working with school-age children or youth.
- Bachelor's degree in a related field.
- Leadership and management experience.
- Experience with program operations and staff support.

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy supporting school-age children and leading a team.

Youth and Teen Director

What they do:

- Leads a Youth and Teen program.
- Supports youth development.
- Manages staff and daily operations.
- Helps plan safe, positive activities for youth and teens.

Education and experience that help:

- Experience working with youth or teens.
- Bachelor's degree in a related field.
- Leadership and management experience.
- Experience with youth programs, recreation, education, or program operations.

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy working with youth and helping teens grow.

Program Leadership Career Path

As professionals gain experience and leadership skills, some may pursue roles that support multiple programs and help guide CYP at the installation level.

Deputy Administrator

What they do:

- Supports multiple CYP programs.
- Helps coordinate installation-wide work.
- Supports program improvement.
- Helps guide program leaders and staff.

Education and experience that help:

- Strong leadership experience.
- Program management experience.
- Experience working with CYP programs.
- 24 college credit hours or degree in a related field.
- Experience supporting children, youth, families, and staff.

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy supporting several programs and helping leaders succeed.

Administrator

What they do:

- Provides overall leadership for CYP.
- Oversees multiple programs.
- Supports staff growth and program quality.
- Helps guide long-term program success.

Education and experience that help:

- Significant leadership and management experience.
- Experience with multiple CYP programs.
- Bachelor's degree or 24 college credit hours in a related field.
- Experience with budgets, staff, compliance, and program planning.

This role may be a good fit for professionals who enjoy leading CYP at the installation level and helping programs succeed.

MCCS Education and Career Resources

Professionals interested in school, credentials, or training should explore education and career resources available through MCCS and their installation.

Where to Look

- Your installation MCCS website.
- The Education or Education Center section on the MCCS homepage.
- MCCS Human Resources.
- Training and Curriculum staff.
- Your supervisor or program leadership team.

What to Ask About

- CDA support or payment options.
- Military School-Age Credential support.
- College classes related to children, youth, or education.
- Tuition help or professional education benefits that may be available.
- Scholarship information.
- College or university partnerships.
- Learning Development Plans (LDPs).

Tip: Ask which resources are available at your installation. Resources may vary by location.

Getting Started

Professionals do not need to know their full career path right away. A good first step is to talk about interests, training, and goals.

- Complete required training.
- Build experience in your current role.
- Talk with your supervisor about career goals.
- Ask Training and Curriculum staff about education and credentials.
- Look for chances to mentor, coach, or lead.
- Create or update your Learning Development Plan.

Your Career Journey Continues

There is no single path to success in CYP. Some professionals enjoy working directly with children. Others enjoy training, Family Child Care, program operations, or leadership. Each path supports children, youth, families, and staff.

Continue learning. Keep building skills. Ask questions. Explore opportunities that match your interests and goals.