

Experience-Based Competency Demonstration

The experience-based competency demonstration option is available to existing early learning providers for all roles which have education requirements listed as an ECE Initial Certificate or ECE Short Certificate¹ under [WAC 110-300-0100](#)². This allows an existing early learning provider who has experience in licensed care to meet these requirements when criteria below are met.

Providers are eligible for an experience-based competency demonstration if the provider has:

1. Seven (7) years in a licensed facility (by August 1, 2024³), as listed in MERIT
 - a. The level of approval will be measured by the lowest-held position of the applicant over the 7-year period.
 - b. DCYF will review applications quarterly.
2. Completed all training requirements each year:
 - a. 10 in-service (STARS) hours each year. This includes years of prior experience through current date in-service requirements as outlined in WAC [0105](#), [0106](#), [0107](#).
 - b. Maintained compliance with all renewable health and safety training (Safe Sleep, CPR, Bloodborne Pathogens, First Aid, Food Handlers).

Completing the Application

DCYF will create an online form in MERIT where providers will indicate their desired option for meeting the education requirements.

The online form will allow providers to indicate their chosen pathway by selecting one of the following options:

1. I meet the eligibility requirements for experience-based competency demonstration, and want to meet education requirement with my experience.
2. I am going to college to complete my required education within 5 years.
3. I am going to do the community based training series.
4. I believe the education I have will qualify me, and I will get my education verified.

When a provider chooses an experience-based competency demonstration, DCYF will begin reviewing their history for all eligibility criteria, and results of the DCYF review will be released quarterly.

More information will be posted here as it is available: <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/earlylearning-profdev/early-learning-provider>

¹ Information about the Washington State ECE Stackable Certificates can be found here: https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/Stackable_Certificates.pdf

² DCYF will recognize an approved experience-based competency demonstration to meet the requirement for “equivalency” as defined by WAC [110-300-0005](#) for roles requiring an ECE Initial Certificate or ECE Short certificate.

³ Family home licensees and center lead teachers have an additional 2 years to meet the next requirement of a short certificate. These roles will have an additional two years (2026) to complete the short certificate or equivalent.