



Early Learning for All

Join ELFA 26-27 FAQ

Eligibility

Q: Can I apply to join ELFA if I am currently in the process of applying for a child care license?

A: No. A current and active California child care license is required in order to submit an application. You may apply once your license is fully active. DEC does not accept applications with a “pending” or “Licensed/Pending increase” status. Please verify your license status on the [Community Care Licensing Division \(CCLD\) website](#) before submitting your application.

Q: My ECE classes are still in progress. Can I still apply?

A: No, you need to have your classes completed and transcript ready to upload at the time of application submission. Application will be considered incomplete if you have not yet completed your ECE units.

Q: I took some ECE classes at different colleges and academic institutions. How can I find out if they are a Commission-Approved institution?

A. Starting in FY2026-2027 all academic units must come from a [Regionally Accredited](#) California Teacher Credentialing approved institution. Click [here](#) for a quick guide.

Q: I took some ECE courses outside the United States. Do you accept ECE coursework and units completed outside the U.S.?

Coursework and degrees completed outside of the United States must be evaluated by a [Commission-approved foreign transcript evaluation agency](#) before it may be used for credentialing purposes. Click [here](#) for a quick guide.

Q: My licensed program does not have any children enrolled yet. May I apply?

A: No. Our eligibility requirement states that currently enrolled children ages 0–5 must make up at least 25% of your licensed capacity. Small Family Child Care Homes must enroll at least two children, and Large Family Child Care Homes must enroll at least three children.

Please note that you must have enrolled children to demonstrate certain Quality Standards during validation. This includes participating in a CLASS Assessment, which requires enrollment of at least 50% of licensed capacity for center-based programs, and at least two children for Family Child Care Homes.

Q: What does ‘in good standing with licensing’ mean?

A: Your Family Child Care (FCC) or Early Education Center must have a current and valid license with the Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) of the California Department of Social Services. which means they do not currently have any of the following:

- An administrative action taken or in the process of being taken (denied application, denied exemption, temporary suspension order, expedited revocation action, revocation action, noncompliance conference, or exclusion action that is being initiated, in process, or already taken place)
- A license in probationary status

Providers must disclose any licensing violations to DEC and we will assess on a case-by-case basis. This includes any pending Type A and/or Type B deficiencies and complaints filed against the licensee / facility.

Q: If I am not ready to submit my ELFA application at this time, when can I apply?

A: Our next open application period will begin in the following Summer. Please check our provider [website](#) for any updates.

[Application process](#)

Q: How do I know if my application is submitted successfully?

A: Once your application is submitted, an auto confirmation message will appear on your screen. You will also be able to send yourself a copy of your submitted application. Our team will review your eligibility and communicate via email within 1-2 weeks of your submittal. To ensure that you receive our communication regarding your application, please add JoinELFA@sfgov.org to your contact list and/or check your Junk folder.

Q: After I submit my application, how long will it take to be accepted into the ELFA network?

A: Meeting eligibility and submitting an application **does not** guarantee validation to be an ELFA program. The timeframe for integrating a new program into the ELFA network varies, depending on the priority ranking of your application and how ready your program is to meet our [Quality Standards](#). You can review our application and validation process [here](#).

Q: How many applications will you accept?

A: DEC will review all eligible applications and select programs based on priority rankings and DEC capacity to invite to the validation process. DEC will proceed down the ranked list only as far as staff capacity allows. Lower ranked programs may not hear from us. Any programs not invited to an orientation by Feb. 2027 will be asked to apply again in the FY 2027-2028 application process.

Q: What are the Prioritization Categories?

A: As we bring new programs into the Early Learning For All network, we intentionally prioritize those programs that will help us to fulfill unmet needs across San Francisco's early care and education system. Based on Child Care Planning and Advisory Council (CPAC) Needs Assessment and DEC data, as well as DEC's strategic plan, we identified the following Prioritization Categories needed to fulfill unmet early care and education needs : Infant and Toddler Care, Experience serving all SF families and have expertise serving historically marginalized, isolated, and unserved populations, and children with a higher prevalence of not being kindergarten-ready, CalWORKs, IFSPs/ IEPs.

Q: Can I edit or withdraw my ELFA application at any time?

A: You may submit edits only during the open application period by emailing JoinELFA@sfgov.org . After the application period closes, we will not be able to accept any additional changes.

If you decide to withdraw your application at any time during the process, please email JoinELFA@sfgov.org

Q: I do not know how to upload transcripts and training certificates to CA Workforce Registry, where can I get help?

A: Please refer to this [video](#) on how to upload documents to the ECE Workforce Registry. For additional questions or support with creating a California ECE Workforce Registry Account please contact the Children's Council Help Desk at support@childrenscouncil.org

Q: I just uploaded my transcripts and training certificates in CA Workforce Registry and it is still pending review. Will this affect my application?

A: The CA Workforce Registry requires time to review and approve your documents. For that reason, we suggest that you complete this step as early as possible. As long as you have created an account and uploaded your documents, it will not affect your application.