



Frequently Asked Questions: Early Childhood Workforce – Registered Apprenticeship

The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF), through its Project Pathfinders initiative, and the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) are partnering to sponsor a pilot for Registered Apprenticeships for the Early Childhood workforce. We hope you will consider participating!

- **What is a Registered Apprenticeship?**

Registered Apprenticeship is a workforce training model that combines supervised on-the-job training with related instruction (classroom studies, in-house training, e-learning, etc.) in subjects related to the apprentice's chosen occupation. Apprentices attend classes at a local community college, technical center or at a sponsor-run school or through other approved methods. Each occupation requires a minimum of 2000 hours of on-the-job work experience and a recommended minimum of 144 related instruction hours for each year of the apprenticeship to supplement the on-the-job work experience. Depending on the occupation, the length of apprenticeship varies between one and six years, with 2-3 years being the expected term for this pilot opportunity. Upon completion, the apprentice receives a nationally recognized apprenticeship credential.

- **How much does it cost?**

There is no cost to the employer or employee to participate in the Registered Apprenticeship program. Because of our pilot's partnership with the Project Pathfinders scholarship initiative, employers will not have to pay for their apprentices' community college tuition. In other job sectors, employers are eligible for reimbursement of tuition costs, but our partnership with Project Pathfinders means that tuition for apprentices is covered by the scholarship initiative instead. See below for more information about the relationship between this apprenticeship opportunity and Project Pathfinders.

- **Who is eligible?**

Early childhood employees who consistently work at least thirty hours per week are eligible for a Registered Apprenticeship.

- **How does this relate to Project Pathfinders?**

Both [Project Pathfinders](#) and the Registered Apprenticeship program are intended to support the professional development and skill building of early care teachers, teacher assistants, and administrators. Project Pathfinders continues to be available for currently-employed early childhood practitioners who wish to pursue additional training or credentials. Pathfinders scholarships can cover the full cost of tuition (for up to two courses per semester), books, and fees for approved courses, and there is no lifetime cap on the amount of cost coverage for approved individuals. Since Pathfinders scholarships do not require any initial outlay of funds by employees or employers, it is a valuable compliment to the Registered Apprenticeship

program for the early childhood workforce. Registered Apprenticeships provide structured, intentional professional development pathways with mentorship; Project Pathfinders provides the funds to ensure that professional development is cost-free to the employer and employee. In addition, apprentices earn community college credits toward an early childhood certificate or Associate Degree.

- **Can scholarships from the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) be used instead of (or in addition to) Pathfinders?**

[VDSS scholarships](#) may indeed be available for these community college courses, and should be the first stop for individuals wishing to apply for scholarships. VDSS and VECF are working hand in hand to ensure that VDSS' capacity to award scholarships is tapped first, and that Pathfinders scholarships can be used to fill in what VDSS scholarships cannot cover, such as the costs for books and fees, and/or the costs of coursework when an individual reaches their lifetime cap in the VDSS program. Please visit http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/professionals_resources.cgi.

- **How do I get signed up?**

To participate in the DOLI/VECF pilot, there are two steps to take to begin your participation.

- 1) The child care employer/sponsor should contact your regional DOLI Registered Apprenticeship Consultant. The consultant will come to your site (free of charge) and answer any questions you have and help you get enrolled. You can find your local consultant's contact information at http://www.doli.virginia.gov/apprenticeship/representatives_headquarters.html. You can enroll at any time.
- 2) Contact VECF's Pathfinders Scholarship Advisor, Mila Spaulding to coordinate the Project Pathfinders scholarship process for the apprentices. Students can register for classes on their own or work with Mila to get registered. Mila can be reached at pathfinders@vecf.org or 804-749-8149.

To learn more about the application process and see application deadlines, visit our Project Pathfinders webpage at <http://www.vecf.org/project-pathfinders/>.

- **What courses are approved for the Registered Apprenticeship?**

The following 3-credit courses, part of the program for Career Studies Certificates in Early Childhood Education, are pre-approved by DOLI and the Pathfinders initiative:

- CHD 120 - Introduction to Early Childhood Education
- CHD 145 - Teaching Art, Music, and Movement to Children
- CHD 165 - Observation and Participation in Early Childhood/ Primary Settings
- CHD 205 - Guiding the Behavior of Children
- EDU 235 or HLT 135 - Child Health and Nutrition
- CHD 118 - Language Arts for Young Children
- CHD 216 - Early Childhood Programs, School, and Social Change
- CHD 146 – Math, Science, and Social Studies for Children
- PSY 235 – Child Psychology

Please note that if the employer/sponsor wishes to include other coursework for the development of the apprentice, the employer will need to seek approval separately from the Department of Labor & Industry.

- **What community colleges offer approved courses?**

The following community colleges offer early childhood courses and programs on-campus, in a face-to-face format. However, please note that almost every community college in Virginia offers online courses for those who cannot attend on-campus classes, AND that students may take online coursework from any of the VCCS colleges. If you would like to know more about online course options, you can find more information on individual college websites or by contacting Mila Spaulding at pathfinders@vecf.org or 804-749-8149.

VCCS campuses offering early childhood coursework:

- [Danville](#)
- [Eastern Shore](#)
- [Germanna](#)
- [J. Sargeant Reynolds](#)
- [John Tyler](#)
- [Lord Fairfax](#)
- [New River](#)
- [Northern Virginia](#)
- [Patrick Henry](#)
- [Paul D. Camp](#)
- [Piedmont Virginia](#)
- [Southwest Virginia](#)
- [Thomas Nelson](#)
- [Tidewater](#)
- [Virginia Highlands](#)
- [Virginia Western](#)

To enroll, apprentices may apply directly to the community college of their choice, or request assistance with applications from VECF's Scholarship Advisor, Mila Spaulding (pathfinders@vecf.org).

For general inquiries about Pathfinders, Registered Apprenticeship, or VECF's Upskilling initiative, please visit [our website](#) or email info@vecf.org.