Program Resource Guide

Protocols for Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators in Center-Based and Out of School Time Programs

Revised as of December 3, 2021

Introduction & Background:

EEC-affiliated programs across the Commonwealth have expressed significant challenges with recruiting, and retaining, qualified early childhood care and education staff to support teaching and learning. To streamline hiring and support programs with the need to immediately hire qualified staff to support operations within their child care programs, EEC has designed Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators to enable programs to independently maintain Educator Qualification requirements and standards onsite without pre-approval/certification from EEC. The Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy proposes flexible alternatives and supports for the roles in EEC-affiliated Center-Based and Out of School Time Programs outlined below.

Effective December 6, 2021, EEC's Teacher Qualifications (TQ) Unit will no longer process Teacher Certificates for educators and staff hired by EEC-affiliated programs. The TQ Unit will continue to provide technical assistance and support to program administrators who request assistance in understanding, and implementing, the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy.

These protocols outlined in this document support EEC-affiliated programs in reviewing and verifying required documentation and qualifications for all educator types listed below.

Provider Type	Educator Types Subject to the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy
Center-Based Programs	• Director's Designee • Staff (e.g., Assistant Teacher, Aide, Student Intern, Paraprofessional, Personal Care Assistant, Volunteer) • Assistant Educator • Teacher (Classroom Teachers) • Lead Teacher (Lead Classroom Teacher) • Program Management (Director, Program Administrator, Instructional Leader, Operational Leader)
Out of School Time Programs	• Assistant Group Leader (e.g., Assistant Leader, Assistant Teacher, Assistant Counselor, Aide, Student Intern, Volunteer) • Group Leader (Educator, Teacher, Counselor) • Site Coordinators (Directors) • Program Administrators

In partnership with EEC-affiliated programs, the following guiding principles will drive the Commonwealth's adoption of additional flexibilities for qualifying educators.

- EEC believes all children should have the opportunity to engage in high-quality care and education opportunities.
- EEC educators and staff should be measured by their competency growth and development, while being structured and supported through on the job learning and training.
- Advanced coursework and practicum opportunities should be relevant equitably accessible to those interested in pursuing careers in the early education and care field.
- EEC, and its providers, will honor pursuit of advanced coursework (as measured by active enrollment,) as an indicator of quality.
- EEC's policies and regulations prescribe a baseline, or floor, for programs to use. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plans should be a tool used to help build a shared understanding between program leadership and educators of the efforts and investments toward meeting the standards and pursuing excellence.

Historically, EEC has administered secondary verification of Educator Qualifications by reviewing and issuing a Teacher Qualifications (TQ) Certificate. Effective, December 6, 2021, EEC's TQ Unit will no longer verify or approve the Educator's Qualifications (including upgrades) prior to hire at an EEC-licensed or approved program. The Program Leadership (Administrator, Director) is responsible for reviewing, verifying, and maintaining documentation of a prospective hire's qualifications. The protocols for meeting EEC's Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators are set forth below. Important to note, TQ Certificates already administered by EEC will continue to be honored, as will those currently in submitted status and not yet approved. The TQ Unit at EEC will review all previously submitted TQ applications on or before March 1, 2022.

To reiterate, as of December 6, 2021, EEC providers and educators will no longer send TQ applications or upgrades to EEC for secondary verification. Programs, as of December 6th, 2021, will maintain this documentation onsite. Your EEC licensor will review staff files, as they currently do, during your routine monitoring visits.

The following content outlines the expectations and requirements of EEC-affiliated programs to adhere to the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy.

Program Requirements:
1. **Using the Revised EEC Policy for Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators and Associated Standards**

Effective December 6, 2021, program administrators will <u>review</u>, <u>verify</u>, and <u>document</u> all components of the educator's qualifications to ensure prospective employees meet the minimum hiring requirements as defined by EEC. Program administrators are expected to maintain these documents on file (digital or paper) for a <u>minimum of five (5) years</u> after the candidate is hired, or in line with the program's HR policies for document retention.

Program leadership at EEC-affiliated programs should familiarize themselves with the Revised Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy. This revised policy introduces new alternatives and opportunities for prospective employees to meet (or exceed) the qualification standards to work in an EEC-affiliated program. It is the program (employer's) responsibility to hire and onboard staff in accordance with this policy.

The Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy represents the minimum qualification standards for hire by EEC. Programs should determine whether they wish to create standards above these minimums for their own hiring practices.

Important to note: Chapter 74 Applications will still be reviewed and processed by the TQ Unit after the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy is released. Chapter 74 Applications support high school programs that meet the definition of vocational-technical education and are approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) pursuant to Chapter 74 and the Vocational Technical Education Regulations. Graduates from Chapter 74-approved vocational technical high school programs must complete two years of Child Development coursework and a total of one hundred and fifty (150 hours) of classroom experience within an infant/toddler or preschool EEC-licensed program. The TQ Unit will continue to accept those Chapter 74 Applications from students pursuing EEC certification after the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy is launched.

Please note: No changes have been made to the Background Record Check and Early Ed Essentials requirements as outlined in 606 CMR 7.00 and 606 CMR 14.00.

II. Document Verification for Qualification Standards (Maintained by Program)

Effective December 6, 2021, program administrators (directors or other associated leadership such as the licensee) will be expected to review and maintain documentation on file for new and prospective hires to meet the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy. Examples of the types of documentation required to verify individual Educator Qualifications are identified within the policy and outlined in the table below. These are not intended be an all-inclusive list of documents program administrators can use to verify work experience and educational background. Program administrators may use discretion in accepting other documents to verify the prospective hire's qualifications to meet the minimum hiring requirements as defined in EEC's Policy. The chart below represents examples of documentation types program administrators can use to verify qualifications and work experience.

Important to note: these requirements represent the foundational (or baseline) qualifications educators are expected to uphold. Policy and EEC guidance does not prevent a candidate with work or educational experience that exceeds this baseline to accept a role within an EEC-affiliated program.

TQ certificates already administered will continue to be honored and should be preserved onsite for review by the EEC licensor. EEC does not require educators with an existing TQ certificate to submit any additional documentation to their employer.

Qualification	**Examples of Acceptable Verification Materials** *(Please note that only one document is required to be reviewed and maintained for each qualification being verified. For example, to verify enrollment in high school, the required document would be **either** the written statement or the copy of transcript, not both.)*
Enrolled in High School or Equivalent	• Written statement from the school verifying enrollment • Copy of transcript showing anticipated date of high school graduation
Completed High School or Equivalent	• Copy of high school diploma • Copy of high school transcript • Copy of GED or HISet diploma or certificate of high school equivalency • Copy of GED or HISet transcript • Written statement from the school verifying high school or GED or HISet graduation and date
Completed High School from a Chapter 74 and EEC approved program	• Copy of high school diploma • Copy of high school transcript that that indicates minimum of two (2) years of Child Growth and Development
Enrolled in College Degree Program	• Written statement from the administration of the college/university program, noting the number of credits for which the student is enrolled
Community College Certificate in Early Childhood	• Copy of certificate • Written statement from the school verifying student name and expected date of certificate completion
Completed Degree	• Copy of degree • Copy of official college transcript • Copy of e-transcript with the authentication page attached • Copy of unofficial college transcript *(may be used as temporary substitution until official transcript is obtained)*
College Coursework	• Copy of official college transcript • Copy of unofficial college transcript • Signed letter from school official or the course professor on school letterhead stationery indicating that the course is complete
Certification in Another State	• Copy of certificate • Signed letter from an official for the state agency on letterhead stationery indicating the certification of the educator
Credential, Including Child	• Copy of credential

Qualification	Examples of Acceptable Verification Materials *(Please note that only one document is required to be reviewed and maintained for each qualification being verified. For example, to verify enrollment in high school, the required document would be **either** the written statement or the copy of transcript, not both.)*
Development Associate (CDA)	• Signed letter from an official working for the training entity on letterhead stationery indicating that the credential is complete
Montessori Certificate	• Copy of certificate from a program accredited by Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) • Signed letter from an official working for the MACTE-accredited Montessori training entity indicating that the certification is complete
DPH-Certified Early Intervention Certificate	• Copy of credential • Signed letter from an official working for the training entity on letterhead stationery indicating that the certification program is complete
DESE-qualified	• Copy of license from MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).
Continuing Education Unit (CEU)	• Copy of CEU certificate • Signed letter from an official working for the training entity or the course professor indicating that the CEU is complete
Professional Development Point (PDP)	• Copy of PDP certificate • Signed letter from an official working for the training entity or the course professor indicating that the PDP is complete
Supervised Work Experience	• Work experience form completed, with signature and contact information of supervisor • Letter outlining details of work experience, with signature and contact information of supervisor
Unsupervised Work Experience	• Written description of experience including job responsibilities, duration of assignment, and contact information of supervisor or employer

Effective December 6, 2021, programs and educators will no longer be required to submit documentation to EEC. These documents will be maintained on file by the program administrator and should be accessible to the EEC licensor upon request when reviewing the staff files during routine monitoring visits.

To support programs with obtaining (and tracking) the required documentation to validate educator qualifications, the Educator's Qualifications Packet has been updated to reflect the Revised Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy and supplemental Work Experience Forms programs may use to document work experience (both supervised and not supervised.) *This packet serves as a resource to the program administrator (leadership) and the forms imbedded within are meant to serve as a recommended template for all new and prospective hires. The program administrator should keep all*

verification documents on file with the program for review by the EEC licensor during their monitoring visit. All new and prospective hires in EEC-affiliated programs must have documents verifying their hire in the employee file (including Work Experience Forms or the appropriate alternative, a letter of recommendation as outlined above.) Existing staff can (and should) continue to use their TQ certificate (if hired prior to the publication of the Revised Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy) to validate their qualifications.

Programs are not expected to further validate college transcripts, work experience attestation forms or course schedules unless explicitly advised by their employer to do so. EEC does not require this level of validation unless the documentation received by the prospective hire is incomplete, illegible, or obtained from an unfamiliar (unrecognizable) institution of higher education. Programs can accept photographs, PDFs, hard copies, and digital downloads of documentation verifying qualifications if they are legible, signed and readily available upon request by EEC.

International work experience and/or coursework completion may require EEC technical assistance to determine applicability. Educators and prospective hires may utilize EEC's updated Educator Qualifications Review Packet- International to streamline their technical assistance request to the TQ Unit. This Packet is being offered to programs as a resource who have prospective hires who hold international work experience and/or coursework completion and may require support from EEC's TQ Unit to verify the documentation. Program administrators are not required to use this packet or seek EEC technical assistance in verifying the documentation for international work experience and/or coursework completion; however, the packet may serve as a resource for programs to streamline their requests for support from the TQ Unit.

The TQ Unit is available to provide technical assistance to programs on an individualized, and small group, basis. Information on EEC's approach to enforcement and technical assistance is outlined below. Programs requesting technical assistance for international work experience and/or coursework completion should reach out directly to the TQ Unit at eecprofdev@mass.gov.

➢ Educator Role & Responsibilities for the Implementation of the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy: Educators and staff employed by an EEC-affiliated program are still required to create an Educator Profile in the Professional Qualifications Registry. EEC is currently in the development stage of producing a new Workforce Registry. Once that system goes live, further guidance will be administered to support the field in creating, and maintaining, their registry profiles.

III. EEC Enforcement & Technical Assistance Approach

As programs and educators orient to the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy, EEC licensors will offer to protect time at each monitoring visit to support programs in understanding these additional flexibilities and the documentation required of the program to adhere to the revised standards. As a best practice, EEC encourages licensors to protect time at all licensure visits (not just the monitoring visit) to review the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy with program leadership. During the monitoring visit, licensors will pull a random sample of staff files (as they do currently) to review

educator qualifications, BRC compliance, First Aid/CPR certification and Early Ed Essentials completion. For programs who have hired new staff since December 6, 2021, the director or program administrator may select a sampling of those newly hired staff files to share with the licensor for review should they need support/technical assistance. The licensor will review the employee's submitted documents to ensure verification by the employer was completed accurately prior to hire. The licensor will use the [Staff Records Checklist](#) and [Document Verification Chart within the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy](#) to review staff files to ensure compliance with the revised policy.

Licensors will use the Staff Records Checklist and Educator's Qualifications Application Packet to guide program administrators in understanding and adhering to the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy.

In order to maximize time spent during the monitoring visit, programs can prepare questions related to the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy (in advance) for the licensor to review.

Licensors will continue to review staff/employee files and enforce the following EEC requirements during their monitoring visits: BRC suitability, Early Ed Essentials Training completion and First Aid/CPR Certification. Educator Qualifications, and the associated documentation required to validate those qualifications after December 6, 2021, will be reviewed and supported with technical assistance and education to the program leadership. If additional technical assistance and support is needed outside of the formal licensing visit, a referral to the TQ Unit to support ongoing questions related to meeting this standard can be made by the licensor.

Licensors will support programs with education and technical assistance in operationalizing the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy. It is not the responsibility or expectation of the licensor to make hiring decisions or verifications on behalf of the program while supporting their questions and requests for technical assistance.

IV. Long-Term Reciprocity & Educator Advancement

EEC is committed to designing sustainable, and achievable, pathways for early childhood educators to enter and advance within the workplace. As such, the flexibilities offered within the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Qualifications Policy are designed to honor and support continued growth and development for early childhood educators throughout the implementation of EEC's Credentialing Framework.

Educators hired on or after December 6, 2021 should remain supported in developing a plan for ongoing professional growth and development. Advanced coursework in early education coursework, as well as on the job learning experience is critical to supporting ongoing competency obtainment and growth will continue to be honored and supported by EEC.

All documents obtained and maintained by the program to verify Educator Qualifications should be kept on file for a minimum of five (5) years after the employee's date of hire.

EEC will provide additional guidance for new employees to transfer any necessary information into the new Professional Registry once it is rolled out.

V. TQ Unit Support & Technical Assistance

In addition to onsite support from the program's licensor, the TQ Unit is available to support programs with understanding, and implementing, the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy.

The TQ Unit will hold twice weekly virtual office hours for EEC programs to ask questions and receive support in implementing the Minimum Hiring Requirements for Educators Policy.

The TQ Unit anticipates providing dedicated 1:1 technical assistance for programs verifying international work experience and education, as well as Chapter 74 and EEC Approved Early Education High School Program Applications. TQ will also support programs in understanding relevant and applicable categories of study for prospective and new hires.

Office hours will be hosted on Zoom on Tuesdays at 2:00pm and Thursdays at 10:00am beginning the week of December 6, 2021 and through December 23, 2021. Upon registering for the Office Hours, attendees will be asked to submit their questions in advance of the session. This will ensure TQ staff are prepared to answer questions and support resolution on hiring determinations at the program level. ***The registration links for these Office Hours can be accessed on [EEC's Strategic Plan Portal under "Engagement Opportunities."](#)***

The TQ Unit can be accessed via email at eecprofdev@mass.gov.