

Will my two-year Associate's Degree count towards my four-year Bachelor's Degree?

Maybe. Montana's current two-year Associate's Degree programs are designed to articulate with the current four-year Bachelor's Degree programs offered through the university system. Degrees from out of state, or degrees received in Montana more than ten years ago, may not articulate as well. In any case, you will need to review your transcripts with an academic advisor to know whether or not coursework from a past degree will count towards a new degree.

Will classes I took from the CCR&R count towards my degree? Will Internet-based or distance-learning coursework count?

Maybe. Classes that you took for university credit from your local child care resource & referral may count towards your degree, depending on course content and hours of credit. The same goes for Internet-based or distance learning classes for which you received university credit. Credits earned this way may or may not count towards either core courses or electives. You will need to review this question with an academic advisor.

Is credit for Pass/Fail courses applicable towards a degree program?

Probably not. Classes you took for pass/fail probably will not count towards your degree in Montana's higher education degree programs, but may be acceptable credit if you are working towards a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential through self-study. You will need to review this question with an academic advisor.

What is the difference in course credits when courses are on quarters or semesters?

The course credits you earned in a quarter-based program are not automatically transferable to a semester-based program. Because all of Montana's higher education institutions now operate on semesters, your academic advisor will tell you how much previous course credits count.



Early Childhood Higher Education

How Can It Work for Me?

A Tip Sheet from the Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Network

What higher education options are available to Montana early care practitioners?

- The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential training for college credit is offered through some universities, community and tribal colleges around the state.
- Two-year Associate's Degree programs are offered through some universities, community and tribal colleges.
- Four-year Bachelor's Degree programs are offered through some universities, community and tribal colleges.
- Master Degree programs are offered through universities.

How would a higher education degree help my career in early childhood?

Just as in other fields, a college degree gives you better understanding, increased and more current knowledge, higher skill levels, and enhanced professionalism in your work with children and families. As you gain education, you will move up the Montana Early Care and Education Career Path, demonstrating to customers and staff your continuing professional development and commitment to quality early care and education.

Would a higher education degree improve my wages?

Yes. A higher education degree leads to progress on the Montana Early Care and Education Career Path, and improves your access to Best Beginnings grants. Through the "Star Quality" reimbursement program you will be paid by the state at a higher level for care you provide to low-income children. Further, many providers become more confident in the market value of their services when they earn a post-secondary degree. They may raise their private pay rates and tighten up their business policies to improve their profits.



Montana Child Care R&R Network
127 East Main Street, Suite 217
Missoula MT 59802
406-549-1028

What motivation would I need to successfully complete an early childhood degree program?

- (1) The early care practitioner has to be willing to work with an academic advisor from the institution of her choice in order to plan for necessary credits, evaluate previous training for potential credit, schedule coursework, and finance a degree program.
- (2) An early care practitioner has to be willing to learn and grow in areas identified as core courses, and able to devote time away from work for classroom instruction, distance learning, or a combination of the two.
- (3) She or he has to be willing to demonstrate application of new knowledge and skills in an early childhood setting for a predetermined number of hours per semester.
- (4) She or he has to be able to complete assignments on time.

Where can I get information about higher education programs available in my region?

A description and contact information for all available programs is found in the booklet, *A Guide to Montana Early Childhood Higher Education Programs*. You can get a copy from your local child care resource & referral agency or the MSU Early Childhood Project, 800-213-6310.

Are there early childhood higher education programs in rural areas?

Yes. In addition to programs offered by community and tribal colleges around the state, the *Early Childhood Rural* program is offered by University of Montana–Western in Dillon. This program uses a combination of self-study, weekly work at a child care site, and intensive institutes to help students earn 24 academic credits of early childhood course work over four semesters. To learn more about this program contact UM-Western, 866-799-9140.

How much does an early childhood higher education degree cost?

Cost varies, depending on the program and the institution. To learn the cost of the program in which you are interested, call the institution's Office of Admissions.

How would I pay for an early childhood degree?

There are many sources of financial aid: (1) Federal Pell Grants, (2) federal student loans, (3) federal higher education tax credits, (4) Montana Early Childhood Scholarships, (5) Best Beginnings Merit Pay, and (6) Montana Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeships. For information on federal financial aid, contact the Financial Aid Office of the institution you want to attend. For information on the Montana Early Childhood Scholarships, contact the MSU Early Childhood Project at 800-213-6310. For information on other programs, contact the Department of Public Health and Human Services at 406-444-5900, or your local child care resource & referral agency.

Why must I work with an academic advisor if I am interested in an early childhood higher education program? Where can I find an academic advisor?

You will need an academic advisor to help you plan your schedule of coursework, evaluate past training for possible college credit, and explore options in student grants and loans. Contact the college or university of your choice or the person identified in the *Guide to Montana Early Childhood Higher Education Programs*, mentioned above. You can get a copy from your local child care resource & referral agency or the MSU Early Childhood Project at 800-213-6310.

Will my past coursework count towards my degree?

Maybe. Past coursework may count toward the core requirements for your degree, toward elective credit for your degree, or it may not count at all. You will have to review your records with an academic advisor. You may be asked to provide a transcript of your past coursework or a syllabus for a course in question. No coursework will count if it was not received from an accredited university program.

How can I find out if my past coursework was from an accredited university program?

Montana programs can accept only course credit earned at an accredited institution. Accreditation ensures that higher education programs meet acceptable levels of quality. Your academic advisor will have a list of programs that have been accredited by agents approved by the U.S. Department of Education.