



Join ELS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The Department of Early Childhood (an alignment of Office of Early Care and Education and First 5 SF) are excited to announce that we are expanding our Early Learning San Francisco (ELS) city-funded program. If you are interested in joining this program, the first step is to view the ELS Informational Session recording on our website at [Join ELS](#) to find out more about the benefits of joining the ELS program and the application process.

The [Join ELS](#) webpage has many other useful resources and tools that will provide guidance on the application process and meeting the requirements and expectations in order to join the ELS city-funded program. We strongly recommend you closely review all information regarding the Application Process, Quality Standards, Quality Pathway Portfolio Tool, and Pre-ELS Resource Guide.

You may still have questions after you have reviewed all posted information on the website. Don't worry! Here are a collection of questions and answers. If you still have questions, please contact our team at JoinELS@sfgov.org.

Eligibility

- 1. Q. Can I apply if I am in the process of applying child care license?**
A. An active California child care license is required. Once your license is activated, you may apply.

- 2. Q. I recently opened my FCC and already met the educational requirements, but I have no enrolled child in my program yet. May I apply?**
A. You may apply to begin the process. You will need enrolled children to demonstrate how you meet some of the Quality Standards, including participation in a CLASS Assessment which requires enrollment of 50% for center-base, at least 2 children for Family Child Care.

- 3. Q. My program is not located in one of priority neighborhoods or only provide services to 3-5 years old. May I apply?**

A. You may apply. While we will be prioritizing funding and access to priority populations, including infants/toddlers and key neighborhoods, the Prop C initiative supports expansion city-funded child care for 0-5 year olds in San Francisco.

4. Q. If I am not ready to submit my ELS application this time, when can I apply?

A. Applications are being accepted on a rolling basis. You are welcome to apply when your program is ready.

5. Q. How soon may I apply before completing Qualification requirements?

A. You or a staff member who is a lead teacher must complete the qualifications prior to starting the formal application process. We encourage the program to access the resources on [JoinELS](#) to begin preparations and contact us at JoinELS@sfgov.org to let us know your progress.

6. Q. What does in good standing with licensing mean?

A. Community Care Licensing Requirements Centers and FCC Homes must have a current license with Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) of the California Department of Social Services, and be 'in good standing' (per the Health and Safety Code Sections 1596.773 and 1596.886), 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

Unresolved Type A, B & C violations noted during a licensing visit. ELS providers shall forward, upon receipt, to OECE any licensing report, any licensing documents that document noncompliance conference between CCLD and the licensee, and/or a copy of an Accusation that indicates CCLD intent to revoke the facility's license.

During the application process, the program officer will review any published reports and will ask if you had any recent (unpublished) visits/citations. If there are issues of concern an program office will discuss the issue with the program, review report, and corrective action plan and will determine the appropriate training and technical assistance if applicable.

Application Process

1. Q. After I submit my application, how soon will I be approved as an ELS Qualified Site?

A. The timeframe for integrating a new program into the ELS network varies. You can use the Quality Pathway Portfolio self-assessment tool on our [JoinELS](#) webpage to find out how ready your program is to meet each quality standard. This tool is designed to

be used with the Quality Standards and the PreELS Resource Guide, also on the webpage.

2. Q. How do I know if my application submitted successfully?

A. Once your application is submitted, an auto confirmation message will appear on your screen. Our team will review your application and respond within three weeks of your submittal. If approved, your program will be accepted into the next available application cohort.

3. Q. What should I expect after I submitted the application? Who should I contact if I have any questions?

A. After your ELS application is approved, you will receive a confirmation email which explains the next steps and which application cohort you have been assigned to. You are welcome to contact JoinELS@sfgov.org for questions.

4. Q. Can I withdraw my ELS application at any time?

A. Yes, you can withdraw your application anytime during the process. Please email us at JoinELS@sfgov.org.

5. Q. Does the office follow any priority policies to process the applications?

A. Yes. Applications are processed as they are received. We check the information provided and licensing information. Accepted programs are assigned to a cohort which will follow a quarterly timeline. Within each cohort, resources are prioritized for programs that are located at the most high-need neighborhood and/or enrollment of the target population.

6. Q. Will I be assigned to a Program Officer?

A. Program Officers are assigned on an as-needed basis when available to programs that are in our high priority categories. Other programs will be on a self-directed track. There are resources, tools, and drop-in sessions with staff that will be accessible to all applicants and staff are accessible via email at JoinELS@sfgov.org.

Program Quality

1. Q. I do not know how to conduct Environmental Assessment. How I can get support?

A. You must complete Standard 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8 before requesting environmental assessment. Our staff will review your portfolio first and then will guide you to complete Environmental Assessment. Of course, additional support will be arranged based on your program needs.

2. Q. How do I know if my program meets the Standard 5- Environment?

A. Environment self-assessment must be conducted by an external reviewer. The reviewer will follow the guidelines below to value the classroom environment based on assessment tools.

- Department approved *Step Up to Quality* self-assessment: a minimum of 70% *yes* indicators; up to 30% of items can be *partial* or *no*. All “no” items need to justification or plan for improvement in each “no” item
- ECERS-R/ITERS-R/FCCERS-R: minimum 4.5 score
- ECERS-3, FCCERS-3: minimum 4.5 score
- NAEYC Classroom Check List: to be discussed with program officer
- Other research-based assessment tool upon approval by SF OECE/First 5 SF: to be discussed with program officer

3. Q. How can I request CLASS assessment and where can I get a support?

A. WestEd is one of the contractors from San Francisco Quality Team who will visit your program and conduct the CLASS Assessment. If you have not attended any CLASS trainings, please use our Pre-ELS Resource Guide to find CLASS trainings resources. Once you have submitted your Quality Pathway Portfolio and participated in a site visit with a program officer, you may be referred for a CLASS Assessment.

4. Q. I am the FCC owner and I do not have 12 ECE units, can I hire a teacher to fulfill Qualification Standard?

A. You may hire a teacher who has completed CDEV 53; CDEV 66; CDEV 67, and 3 ECE elective units. You must enter the teacher’s employment information including their wage in your own account of CA Early Care & Education Workforce Registry. We may ask you to show additional document to prove your staff's employment.

5. Q. I took some ECE classes at different colleges. How can I know if those classes are equivalent to CDEV 53; CDEV 66; and CDEV 67?

A. We recommend reaching out to City College of San Francisco- Child Development and Family Studies Department and meeting with an advisor. You can contact the department at cdev@ccsf.edu or 415-452-5605.

6. Q. My program currently is not using Early Learning SF approved curriculum. Can my program keep using our own curricula?

A. For programs using a self-developed curriculum or curriculum that is not pre-approved, please submit the Curriculum Statement Form that is part of the [Quality Pathway Portfolio Tool](#) and any supporting documentation that describe how your curriculum is aligned with the CA Foundation & Frameworks and how the curriculum promotes learning across all domains. If you have questions about curricula not listed as the Early Learning SF approved curriculum, please contact JoinELS@sfgov.org.

7. Q. Currently my program does not follow the ELS group size standard. Should my program decrease enrollment and service less children?

We recommend that you contact JoinELS@sfgov.org to arrange a meeting about your particular situation. We can offer consultation on modifying your space, ratios, or group size to meet the requirement.

8. Q. I already have my BA degree. Do I have to attend other professional trainings?

A. Teachers must complete at least 6 hours of training on each of the following topics at least once: 1) Child Development/ Learning Foundations (0-5); 2) Inclusion and Meeting the Needs of Young Children with Disabilities or other special needs; 3) Family Engagement and Support; 4) Anti-Bias/ Equity training. Once a program officer reviews your Quality Pathway Portfolio, they may recommend additional training to prepare you to meet the Quality Standards.

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

A. You can contact Children's Council Help Desk by email, support@childrenscouncil.org; or phone 415-343-4669. You are welcome to contact them for support with administrative access and navigating your registry profile.

10. Q. How can I request technical assistance or coaching supports when I need help building my quality portfolio?

A. Please refer to the Pre-ELS Resource Guide (English, Spanish, Chinese) on the website for additional information. Once your application is approved, you will be invited to drop-in sessions for your application cohort. For coaching support on a specific standard, you may contact JoinELS@sfgov.org. A program officer will evaluate your request and determine available resources.