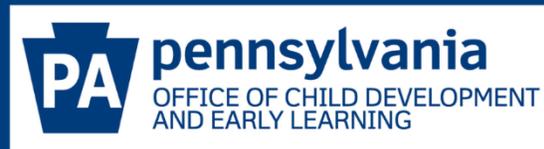


# PDO ANNOUNCEMENT 22 #01



Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning  
Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development

**Issue Date:** Feb. 7, 2022

**Effective Date:** July 1, 2022

**End Date:** N/A

**Subject:** Career Pathway Level A-Plus Verification Change and Clarifying Procedures for Verifying Credits and Degrees from Nationally Accredited (Non-Regionally Accredited) Institutions

**To:** All Department of Human Services (DHS) Certified Child Care Providers; Early Childhood Education Professionals; Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs); Pennsylvania Key Career Pathway Verifiers and Career Pathway Staff; Professional Development Organizations (PDOs); and The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) staff

**From:**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tracey Campanini'.

Tracey Campanini  
Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning

## PURPOSE

To provide clarification on the verification of credits and degrees from nationally accredited (non-regionally accredited) institutions and to provide information on a procedural change in the verification of educational transcripts when designating an individual's Career Pathway level.

## BACKGROUND

Early Childhood Education (ECE) professionals submit credentials and degree information to the Professional Development (PD) Registry to receive verification and placement on the [Career Pathway](#) to indicate current Career Pathway level in the ECE workforce, and to verify qualification requirements of various Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) programs. Upon submission for review, a

team of verifiers, following standard protocols, review, verify, and assign a Career Pathway level based upon submitted qualifications, credentials, degrees, and transcripts.

Non-regionally accredited Associate of Specialized Technology (AST) / Associate of Specialized Business (ASB) has been recognized on the Career Pathway at a Level A Plus. Credits and degrees from a non-regionally accredited Institutions are **not** recognized anywhere else on the Career Pathway (Level B, Level B Plus, Level C, Level C Plus, Level D, Level E). Nationally accredited institutions are also not recognized on the Career Pathway.

The United States does not have a centralized authority exercising singular, national control over postsecondary educational institutions. Consequently, the character and quality of postsecondary schools and their programs can vary widely. The role of accreditation in higher education is a voluntary process that ensures a college, university, or degree program meets a universal standard for quality. This gives an institution and its graduates credibility with other institutions and employers.

The United States Department of Education (USDOE) and the non-profit Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) oversee the accreditation process. They review the federally recognized agencies that set accreditation standards. There are three general types of accrediting agencies, each of which serves a specific purpose: Regional accrediting agencies, national accrediting agencies, and programmatic accrediting agencies. For the purposes of Career Pathway verification protocols, this document will discuss the differences between regional and national accrediting agencies and accreditation.

## Regional Accreditation

Regional accrediting agencies concentrate reviews on institutions in specific regions of the United States and oversee institutions that place a focus on academics that are state-owned, non-profit colleges or universities. These institutions receive regional accreditation from one of seven regional accrediting bodies (operating in six regions of the US), determined by where the school is located. The seven regional accrediting organizations for institutions of higher education in the United States are:

- Accrediting Commission for Community & Junior Colleges (ACCJC) Western Association of Schools & Colleges
- The Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
- New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)
- WASC Senior College & University Commission (WSCUC)

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) and the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) oversee regional accrediting agencies. Degrees/credits from regionally accredited institutions are accepted by other regionally accredited institutions as well as nationally accredited institutions. Regionally accredited programs may be more expensive than nationally accredited programs and are mostly non-profit (fundraise through federal grants, private donations, legacy giving.) Regionally accredited institutions typically have stricter standards and are more selective during the admissions process. Employers accept regionally accredited degrees, and graduates are eligible for corporate tuition reimbursement plans.

[The Council for Higher Education Accreditation \(CHEA\)](#) can be used to identify if the Institution of Higher Education (IHE) is regionally accredited.

### **National Accreditation (Non-Regionally)**

National accrediting agencies operate across the United States and primarily review proprietary institutions, career-based single-purpose institutions, and religiously affiliated institutions. National accreditation is comparable in many ways to regional accreditation. National accreditation also indicates that a school underwent a voluntary review by a third-party accrediting agency, which evaluated the school's academic programs, student resources, and institutional processes. It is not as rigorous as regional accreditation, so it does not hold as much prestige. However, it is the accreditation standard for vocational, trade, and faith-based schools. Degrees/credits from nationally accredited institutions are only accepted by other nationally accredited institutions not at regionally accredited institutions. Nationally accredited programs may be less expensive than regionally accredited programs and are mostly for-profit (earn revenue through enrollment or selling educational products.) Nationally accredited institutions typically have more relaxed admission standards. Employers do accept nationally accredited degrees; however, graduates are not always eligible for corporate tuition reimbursement plans.

For a descriptive comparison of regional versus national accreditation visit:  
<https://www.online.drexel.edu/news/national-vs-regional-accreditation.aspx>

## **DISCUSSION**

Effective July 1, 2022, non-regionally accredited ASB/AST will be removed from the Career Pathway Level A Plus. For degrees and credits received after July 1, 2022, no credits from a non-regionally accredited Institution will be counted for purposes of placement on the ECE Career Pathway. This includes credits from a nationally (non-regionally) accredited Institution that does not also hold regionally accreditation. Degrees and credits received from a nationally (non-regionally) or regionally accredited institution prior to July 1, 2022 will be counted for Career Pathway placement.

Individuals who have already received a Career Pathway placement in which nationally accredited degrees and/or credits received prior to July 1, 2022 that were not counted, must submit a review form to have their Career Pathway placement reviewed and

potentially revised. This review form can be found on the [www.pakeys.org](http://www.pakeys.org) website under the professional development tab.

It is important that staff of IHEs, Professional Development Organizations (PDOs), the Pennsylvania Key and Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs) understand and convey this change to ECE professionals, so those interested in an ECE career, are able to make informed decisions about what counts within the system, and do not invest time and funds in coursework from non-regionally accredited Institutions.

In addition, OCDEL-funded pathways support only regionally accredited coursework. Individuals and program administrators are reminded to use the PDO Professional Development Coordinators to support Career Pathway advancement needs. In many cases, individuals may qualify for OCDEL-funded support for Career Pathway advancement. Contact Information for Regional PDOs can be found at [Professional Development Organizations](#).

## NEXT STEPS

- 1) Review and share this information with all relevant staff.
- 2) Discuss Career Pathway needs with staff.
- 3) Contact Regional PDO to discuss Career Pathway advancement needs.

<b>Professional Development Organizations (PDOs):</b>	
<b>Shippensburg University (PASSHE PDO at SHIP)</b> 1871 Old Main Drive Shippensburg University Shippensburg, PA 17257  <b>Phone:</b> 717-422-6328 or 301-524-7752 <b>Fax:</b> 717-477-4053  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:passhe-pdo@ship.edu">passhe-pdo@ship.edu</a>	<b>Public Health Management Corporation (ECE PDO at PHMC)</b> 1500 Market Street Centre Square East Philadelphia, PA 19102  <b>Phone:</b> 267-773-4400 <b>Fax:</b> 267-765-2397  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:ecepdo@phmc.org">ecepdo@phmc.org</a>