



**Early Childhood Mental Health Certificate Program
Student Handbook
2025 - 2026**

ECMH Program Contacts

Suzanne Boyd (sboyd@charlotte.edu)

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ECMH Certificate Program Overview

The Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Certificate is an interdisciplinary post-baccalaureate certificate program that addresses the increasing need for mental health services for children from birth to five years of age. The certificate program welcomes professionals with an undergraduate or graduate degree in a human services field, including counseling, education, early childhood special education, pediatrics, allied health services (i.e., occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language pathology), psychology, and social work. Individuals currently enrolled in a human service-related graduate degree program at UNC Charlotte are also welcome to apply.

The ECMH Certificate is sponsored jointly by UNC Charlotte's School of Social Work and Cato College of Education. The certificate program requires a minimum of 12 graduate credit hours, including four core courses.

ECMH Certificate Program Admission Information

Minimum Requirements for Admission

Applicants are eligible to apply to the ECMH certificate program if they have:

- A bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university
- GPA of 2.75 or higher on all post-secondary work attempted. If the applicant has earned a post-baccalaureate degree, grades in the program will be taken into consideration
- Three recommendations
- Resume
- Statement of Purpose addressing all of the following:
 1. What first interested you about the certificate program?
 2. How do you think the certificate can help you in your career?
 3. Talk about your previous experience with diverse children and families, that is, people who are from different backgrounds than your own. What was your biggest challenge and what did you learn from the experience?
 4. What strengths and skills do you bring to the certificate program?

Application Deadline:

Fall Semester (August)

Priority Application Submission: **March 1st**

Final Application Submission: **August 1st**

Spring Semester (January)

Priority Application Submission: **October 1st**

Final Application Submission: **December 1st**

Overview of Application and Selection Process:

Application must be submitted to the [UNC Charlotte Graduate School](#) by the fall and spring [deadlines](#) published annually by the Graduate School. Applications are reviewed by the ECMH Admissions Committee, which is composed of one full-time faculty member from the School of Social Work and one full-time faculty member from the College of Education who regularly teach in or administratively support the certificate program. The following materials are submitted: Unofficial transcripts of all academic work attempted beyond high (secondary) school (official final transcripts must be submitted if an applicant is offered admission), a statement of purpose (essay), three recommendation forms submitted electronically by recommenders (waived if the student is currently enrolled in the MSW Program or a master's degree program housed in the College of Education), resume, and any additional documentation required by the UNC Charlotte Graduate School. Application elements are scored using an ECMH Application Rating Rubric based on a point system.

Competitive applicants (those with the highest scores) are selected until all seats are filled. The committee's recommendation is submitted to the Graduate School for a final decision. Applicants are notified of the decision of admission or denial via a letter in the Graduate School portal. Applicants for spring admission are notified of final decisions no later than January 5th, and applicants for fall are notified of final decisions no later than August 1st. A waitlist is not used for the ECMH graduate certificate program.

Additional Information for Applicants:

- Academic credit is not given for life experience, nor is life experience part of the admission rating rubric. This is communicated to applicants via the School of Social Work website and student handbooks.
- Persons with disabilities who need assistance in the admission process must contact the School of Social Work to request such assistance a minimum of fifteen days before the application deadline. The applicant will be connected with the Office of Disability Services to request that a staff member assist the applicant with completing the application.
- Students who leave the ECMH program (in good standing, due to suspension, or due to termination) and wish to return can contact the Coordinator of the ECMH Certificate Program or the Graduate School for guidance related to readmission or reinstatement.

Educational Objectives

The Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) program focuses on children from birth to five years of age and their families. Graduates of the Certificate program will be able to:

- Promote awareness about the importance of early childhood mental health
- Work with diverse families with young children
- Identify evidence-informed services for young children and their families
- Recognize ecologically valid mental health assessments of young children
- Explain the relationship of social, cognitive, and communication development in young children
- Support positive, relationship-focused communication between young children and their adult caretakers
- Facilitate positive social-communication skills among young children, parents, and other caretakers in a variety of settings.

ECMH Plan of Study

The ECMH Certificate requires 12 graduate credit hours. Students must successfully complete four course courses listed below. Courses can be completed in any order. All courses are offered fully online. Not all courses are offered every semester.

Four Core Courses:

- SOWK 5366 Early Childhood Mental Health (3 credits) FALL
- CHFD 6240 Advanced Studies in Infant and Child Development (3 credits) FALL
- SPED 6242 Enhancing Communication and Supporting Behavior in Inclusive Settings (3 credits) SPRING
- SPED 6350 Young Children w/ Disabilities and their Families: Interdisciplinary Collaboration (3 credits) SPRING

Total Program Credits = 12

Academic Advising

ECMH certificate students are assigned an academic advisor who is a faculty member in either the School of Social Work or the Cato College of Education. The primary role of the student's academic advisor in the ECMH certificate program is to assist the student with course selection and the registration process (i.e., assisting students in obtaining permits to enroll in courses).

Graduate School Academic Policies

The information in this section can be found in the "Graduate Certificate Requirements" section of the [Graduate Catalog](#). This handbook contains only a partial listing of academic policies, procedures, and requirements. Students in the ECMH certificate program should refer to the [Graduate Catalog](#) for planning their course of study and meeting requirements for graduation.

Graduate Certificate Requirements

Students may apply the credits earned in the certificate program toward a single degree that they pursue in conjunction with the graduate certificate. If a student is interested in pursuing a graduate degree after the certificate has been awarded, they should consult the [Graduate Catalog](#). Students may not apply credits earned in one certificate program toward the satisfaction of requirements in a second certificate program.

Students may enroll in a graduate certificate program only or may complete the certificate in conjunction with a graduate degree program at the University. Hours taken toward a graduate certificate may be counted toward a graduate degree program with the recommendation of the graduate program coordinator and the approval of the Graduate School.

Graduate certificate programs at UNC Charlotte generally require at least 12 credit hours of graduate coursework. Up to six hours taken at post-baccalaureate status at UNC Charlotte may be applied toward a certificate with the recommendation of the program coordinator and the approval of the Graduate School. Students ordinarily may not transfer hours from another institution into a certificate program. The graduate certificate is awarded to a student who has completed the specified program of study with a GPA of 3.0 or above within five years from the time of enrollment in the first certificate course and has applied to graduate.

Time Limit

No courses older than five years may be applied towards a graduate certificate. Courses that exceed this time limit must be retaken.

Application for Certificate

Students should submit the Online Graduation Application at the beginning of the term in which they anticipate completion of the certificate program. Adherence to Graduate School deadlines is expected. Students are encouraged to review their individual [DegreeWorks](#) audit to ensure they have met all graduation requirements.

Grading Policies and Grade Point Averages

Complete information regarding grading policies, grades, credits, and obtaining transcripts is provided in the "Degree Requirements and Academic Policies" section of the [Graduate Catalog](#). Grades for graduate students are as follows:

Grade	Definition	Grade Points per Semester Hour
A	Commendable	4
B	Satisfactory	3
C	Marginal	2
I	Incomplete	
P	Pass	
U	Unsatisfactory	0
SP	Satisfactory Progress	
UP	Unsatisfactory Progress	
W	Withdrawal	
WE	Withdrawal with Extenuating Circumstances	
N	No Credit	
UX	Academic Dishonesty Violation	
AU	Audit	
NR	No recognition given for audit	

The grade point average for a graduate student is based only on those courses in his/her approved program of study taken at UNC Charlotte. It is determined by multiplying the number of grade points for each grade (A=4, B=3, C=2, U=0) by the number of semester hours credit received in that course, adding all accumulated grade points together, and then dividing by the total number of semester hours the student has attempted (except those for which the student received a grade of I, IP, SP, UP, W, P, N, AU, or NR).

Grades and Academic Standing

An accumulation of three *final course grades* of C or ANY final course grade of U (Unsatisfactory) will result in suspension from the UNC Charlotte Graduate School. This is Graduate School policy. A graduate student whose enrollment has been suspended or terminated because of grades is ineligible to attend any semester or the summer session in any UNC Charlotte course unless properly reinstated.

Important University Policies

Accommodations for Disabilities

No otherwise qualified student shall, on the basis of disability, be subjected to discrimination or excluded from participation in the ECMH certificate program. A student with a disability may be protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and be eligible for reasonable accommodation to provide equal opportunity to meet academic criteria for professional behavior and scholastic performance. Any otherwise qualified student with a protected disability who requests a reasonable accommodation must notify the UNC Charlotte Office of Disability Services and provide documentation as needed. The Office of Disability Services will work with the faculty member(s) on how to accommodate the student. If the student has questions about disability-related policy, they should contact the [Office of Disability Services](#).

Code of Student Responsibility and Academic Integrity

Violations of the [Code of Student Responsibility - Policy 406](#) and the [Code of Student Academic Integrity - Policy 407](#) warrant immediate action and are addressed through University procedures. Examples include, but are not limited to, egregious academic dishonesty (as defined by the instructor), sexual misconduct, acts of harm, illicit drug use, and theft. Acts of harm include harassment, intimidation, bullying, and injury. In such cases, the instructor will notify the Program Director immediately. University policies and procedures will be followed. The student's standing in the program may be impacted by the resolution of the case. A temporary *Compliance Plan* may be developed until a resolution is reached at the university level.

Nondiscrimination Policy

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte affirms that its educational and employment decisions must be based on the abilities and qualifications of individuals and may not be based on irrelevant factors, including personal characteristics, that have no connection with academic abilities or job performance. Therefore, the University prohibits discrimination and harassment in its educational and employment decisions and provides equal opportunities for all members of the University community and for all those seeking to join the University community.

The following factors may not form the basis for educational or employment-related decisions: race; color; religion, including belief and non-belief; sex, including but not limited to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical condition, and parenting; sexual orientation; actual or perceived gender identity, including but not limited to gender expression, transition status (including but not limited to physical transition), transgender status, and gender nonconformity; age; national origin; physical or mental disability; political affiliation; veteran status; and genetic information.

In March 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly and Governor Pat McCrory enacted the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act, also known as House Bill 2. This law replaces local nondiscrimination policies with a statewide policy. The University and the School of Social Work appreciate the serious concerns many have regarding this law. We want to assure every current and future member of our community that UNC Charlotte recognizes and values the inherent dignity and worth of each individual student, employee, and visitor.

All-Gender Bathrooms

One of the requirements of the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act is that persons must use the bathroom that reflects the gender on their birth certificate rather than their gender identity. UNC Charlotte will continue to label multiple-occupancy restrooms and changing facilities for single-sex use with appropriate signage. However, in 2014, UNC Charlotte undertook an initiative to provide single-occupancy, gender-neutral restrooms across campus to make selecting a restroom easier for all students, faculty, staff, and visitors, including transgender individuals, families, and individuals with disabilities who may have an attendant. A list

of all-gender restrooms, along with maps to those restrooms and a list of additional planned restrooms, can be found on the [All-Gender Restrooms webpage](#) through the Office of Legal Affairs.

Sexual Harassment

All students are required to abide by the [UNC Charlotte Sexual Harassment Policy](#), including the policy on the [Standard for Responsible Use](#). Sexual harassment, as defined in the UNC Charlotte Sexual Harassment Policy, is prohibited, even when carried out through computers or other electronic communications systems, including course-based chat rooms or message boards.

Religious Accommodation

It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious observances on which they will be absent by submitting a [Request for Religious Accommodation Form](#) to their instructor before the census date for enrollment for a given semester. The census date for each semester (typically the tenth day of instruction) can be found in [UNC Charlotte's Academic Calendar](#). View the full [Religious Accommodation for Students](#) policy on the Office of Legal Affairs website.

Grievance Procedures

University [Student Grievance Procedures](#) are on the Office of Legal Affairs website. If a student in the ECMH certificate program has a grievance, college policies might also be applicable.

University Supports

In addition to academic advising, the following supports are available to graduate students at UNC Charlotte. Students are welcome to pursue these services at any time.

Center for Graduate Life

Student outreach, engagement, and development offered through the Graduate School's [Center for Graduate Life](#) provide the support and sense of community students need to meet the challenges they will face throughout their graduate experience.

Center for Wellness Promotion

[The Center for Wellness Promotion](#) presents a variety of group and campus-wide wellness and prevention activities related to alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, sexual responsibility, and men's and women's health issues.

Christine F. Price Center for Counseling and Psychological Services

The [Center for Counseling and Psychological Services](#) provides short-term individual and group counseling, psychological assessment, consultation for faculty, staff, parents, and students, and educational programs to the campus community.

Office of Disability Services (ODS)

If the student has a documented disability and requires accommodation in any course, contact the [Office of Disability Services](#). Accommodations for learning will be arranged by that office and communicated to the instructor.

Writing Resources Center

Social work relies on well-developed verbal comprehension skills and expressive communication skills. The ECMH curriculum is writing-intensive. Most classes have assignments of one major paper and/or several minor papers. Almost all paper assignments require students to use the publication style found in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th edition. For students who want to improve their writing skills, UNC Charlotte has a [Writing Resources Center](#) staffed by graduate writing consultants who work with writers at all stages of the writing process: prewriting, focusing, organizing, revising, and editing. Programs include one-on-one and group consulting, online writing consultants for distance education students, classroom presentations, and library and internet research.

Readmission to the ECMH Certificate Program

Readmission for students who withdrew from the ECMH Certificate Program while in good academic and professional standing

The UNC Charlotte Graduate School has an established [policy regarding readmission](#) for those in good academic and professional standing. Degree students, graduate certificate students, and post-baccalaureate students whose enrollment is interrupted will remain eligible to register for one calendar year without having to reapply for admission to the University if they are in good standing and have not exceeded the time limit for their academic program of study. After an absence of more than 12 months, the student's matriculation will be closed, and the student must apply for readmission; acceptance is subject to department, program, and Graduate School approval. When a student who withdrew while in good academic and professional standing seeks readmission, the ECMH Program Director will make the recommendation in consultation with the Director of the CHFD M.Ed. program. Even if the ECMH Program Director supports readmission, the final decision rests with the Graduate School. If the Graduate School approves the request, the ECMH Program will be responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of a reinstatement plan.

Appeal of academic suspension or termination for the purpose of reinstatement

The UNC Charlotte Graduate School has established procedures for [appealing an academic suspension or termination for the purpose of reinstatement](#). The Graduate Program Director is required to make a recommendation regarding reinstatement (i.e., letter of support for Category 1 appeal, and/or Suspension Appeal form). The ECMH Program Director will make the recommendation in consultation with the Director of the CHFD M.Ed. program. Even if the ECMH Program Director supports reinstatement, the final decision rests with the Graduate School, not the School of Social Work. If the Graduate School approves the request, the ECMH Program will be responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of any remediation plan.

Readmission of a terminated graduate student

The UNC Charlotte Graduate School has established procedures for [readmission of a terminated graduate student](#). Students who have been academically terminated from the Graduate School and/or a UNC Charlotte graduate program are not eligible for readmission as either a degree-seeking or non-degree-seeking graduate student. However, if after two years the student can demonstrate the potential for academic success and/or personal and professional development since leaving the University, the student may initiate a request for readmission to the Graduate School (see the current Graduate Catalog for instructions). Applications submitted by students who were previously terminated will be reviewed by the ECMH Program Director in consultation with the Director of the CHFD M.Ed. program. The recommendation will be communicated to the Graduate School. Even if the ECMH Program Director supports reinstatement, the final decision rests with the Graduate School. If the Graduate School approves the request, the ECMH Program will be responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of a reinstatement plan.