

## Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals Area VIII: Teacher Qualifications and Professional Development

### Rationale:

Professional development in early childhood education contributes to continuous advancement of the field by supporting ongoing development of knowledge and practices that contribute to the quality of life for all young children and their families. Professionalism in early childhood education and care requires (a) engaging in ongoing dialogue with others, both within and outside the field, to advance the state of knowledge through various types of observation, research, and reflection; (b) communicating the importance of high quality care and education for young children; and (c) constructing and monitoring compliance with guidelines for best practice that exceed governmental requirements. Early childhood professionals must understand the laws and regulations that guide practice, as well as voluntary standards that exceed legal requirements. As individuals committed to improving the lives of young children and their families, early childhood professionals serve as effective advocates for policies and procedures that support optimal development. Above all, professionals in the field of early childhood model high standards for ethical practice.

### Knowledge:

Professional practice in early childhood education and care is governed by quality indicators prescribed by federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and by policy statements of governing boards. It is enhanced by standards and position statements of professional organizations.

- Early care and education professionals make decisions concerning program planning and practice based on current federal, state, and local laws and regulations for safe, nurturing, inclusive, and enriching programs.
- In addition to meeting legal and regulatory requirements, professionals take steps to achieve high quality standards advocated by professional organizations that often exceed legal requirements.

Professional development is an ongoing process of maintaining current knowledge and practice, participating in ongoing professional development opportunities, and engaging in ongoing synthesis and critical analysis of research and theory as it is applied to practice.

- Professionalism requires knowledge and competency in all areas of child growth and development, educational strategies, and skills to develop, implement, and manage high-quality programs.
- Professionalism requires the integration of reflective teaching practice into daily program operations.
- Professional development is demonstrated and evaluated by early childhood professionals through the construction and implementation of job performance plans.
- Professional development requires a commitment to continue learning through reading, research, reflection, and ongoing dialogue with other professionals.

Professionalism includes advocacy for improving the quality of life for all young children and their families.

- Professionalism includes the ability to explain professional practice as it relates to research, theory, and professional guidelines and standards.
- Professionalism involves the ability to clearly articulate the significance of the early years and the value of early childhood education and care programs to families and to the community while working collaboratively with families, colleagues, and community members to develop program practices and policies that are responsive to and appropriate for children and their families.
- Professionalism promotes leadership skills that enable early childhood practitioners to develop skills needed in order to advocate for high quality programming at local, state, and federal levels.

Professionalism involves the ability to interact ethically with colleagues and families as well as with board and community members to build partnerships that support growth and development of the entire learning community.



Professionalism includes a commitment to a code of ethics that respects the confidentiality of all members while working to support the healthy development of children and their families.

### Practices Based on Knowledge:

Early childhood professionals in a variety of types of settings where young children learn and develop:

#### 1. Commitment to Quality

Focus on integrating high quality standards and practices into the development, implementation, and management of programs serving young children and their families.

#### 2. Professional Development

Demonstrate commitment to acquiring and maintaining current professional knowledge and to ongoing professional development. This includes acquiring the necessary skills to engage in competent research and to contribute to the professional and popular literature in order to expand the base of knowledge within the profession and for the public at large.

#### 3. Advocacy

Advocate high quality early childhood care and education programs that serve young children and their families.

#### 4. Ethics

Interact with colleagues, families, board members, and the broader community in ethical ways to build authentic partnerships that support the healthy growth and development of young children. Follow and model a professional code of ethics.



Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Early childhood professionals at ALL LEVELS have knowledge related to:	Professionals at Level I implement practices according to program guidelines and policies. They:	Professionals at Level II demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development. They:	Professionals at Level III demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills. They:	Professionals at Level IV demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities. They:

**1. Commitment to Quality**

<b>1.1 Regulatory Standards</b>	Understand and comply with legal and regulatory mandates related to daily practices that promote safe and healthy learning environments for children and professionals	Maintain high quality standards that exceed minimal regulatory requirements	Model and help others develop ways to establish and maintain high quality standards that exceed minimal regulatory requirements	Assume leadership for developing, implementing, and revising the practices that meet and exceed regulatory codes
<b>1.2 Quality Improvement</b>	Follow guidelines to implement practices that exceed governmental regulations	Set up a system for documenting practices that exceed governmental requirements and comply with current standards recommended by professional organizations	Model for others and help others develop practices that meet high quality standards recommended by professional organizations	Plan, implement, assess, and modify strategies to meet high quality standards recommended by professional organizations

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<b>2. Professional Development</b>				
<b>2.1 Content Knowledge</b>	Possess skills in math and language equivalent to the level of a high school graduate	Possess skills in math, language/literacy, science, social studies, and early childhood content equivalent to having completed two years of post-secondary education	Possess knowledge and skills in math, language/literacy, science, social studies, and early childhood content as appropriate for a graduate of a four-year institution of higher learning	Possess an advanced degree in early childhood education and use that degree to provide leadership that promotes continuing education for self and others
<b>2.2 Use of Resources</b>	Use materials, time, and space effectively	Develop various systems for effective use of materials, time, and space	Model and encourage others to use effectively materials, time, and space	Oversee the effective use of materials, time, and space in the program
<b>2.3 Hygiene and Appropriate Dress</b>	Practice good hygiene and dress appropriately for interacting with young children in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities	Continue to practice good hygiene and appropriate dress and help others understand the importance of dressing appropriately for a variety of activities	Model and encourage others to practice good hygiene and to dress appropriately for working with young children in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities	Plan and implement strategies for encouraging assistants and/or staff members to practice good hygiene and to maintain appropriate appearance for interacting with young children in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities
<b>2.4 Professional Attitude</b>	Demonstrate a positive, responsible, sensitive, and respectful attitude in working with young children and their families	Further develop skills for demonstrating positive, responsible, sensitive, and respectful attitudes in working with young children and their families	Model and encourage others to demonstrate positive, responsible, sensitive, and respectful attitudes in working with young children and their families	Provide leadership in development and maintenance of positive, responsible, sensitive, and respectful attitudes in working with young children and their families
<b>2.5 Positive Relationships with Colleagues</b>	Demonstrate care for and acceptance and support of others working in the program	Further extend care and acceptance of others working in the program by listening to concerns and by providing supportive assistance when appropriate	Model and encourage others to demonstrate care for and acceptance of others working in the program	Provide program leadership for establishing and improving practices of caring for and accepting others
<b>2.6 Professional Work Habits</b>	Exhibit professional work habits including confidentiality, respect for all people, dependability, time management, independence, and teamwork	Further extend efficiency and effectiveness in work habits	Model and encourage others to exhibit professional work habits including confidentiality, respect for all people, dependability, time management, independence, and teamwork	Oversee ongoing strategies to facilitate improvement in work habits including confidentiality, respect for all people, dependability, time management, independence, and teamwork

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<b>2.7 Supporting Program Goals</b>	Show commitment to program goals and participate in their achievement and periodic review	Align activities with program goals	Help others find ways to contribute to attainment of program goals	Monitor and share with others the program's progress toward goals
<b>2.8 Continuous Updating of Knowledge</b>	Attend orientation, read/view training materials on early childhood education and care, and/or participate in additional opportunities to increase competency for working with young children and families	Read professional journals and communicate with other professionals (e.g., conferences, workshops) to learn about current trends and best practices (derived from evidence-based research) for working with young children and families	<p>Review current evidence-based research on early childhood practices and make decisions based on current information</p> <p>Share resources and help to instill a love of learning throughout the organization, including its staff, children, and families</p> <p>Stay up to date on research and policies related to early childhood</p>	Practice and disseminate knowledge in local, state, regional, and national publications and/or meetings
<b>2.9 Participating in Reflective Practice and Research/Inquiry</b>	Participate in reflective practice or research by keeping records, sharing observations, and/or providing technical support to researchers	Formulate questions that arise from ongoing practice and seek answers through observation, journaling and reflection, reading research, or consultation with other professionals	<p>Read research and apply beneficial techniques or knowledge as appropriate</p> <p>Plan and carry out research/inquiry designed to generate information that informs practice</p>	<p>Plan and carry out research/inquiry designed to generate information that informs practice. Provide leadership for planning, implementing, and evaluating ongoing research designed to answer practical questions related to best practices</p> <p>Communicate research needs to professions and disciplines that relate directly and indirectly to the early education field so as to expand the necessary holistic network of knowledge that bears on child and family well-being</p>
<b>2.10 Philosophy of Early Childhood Practice</b>	Support and implement program philosophy and begin to formulate own philosophy of education	Articulate a personal philosophy of early childhood professional practice informed by theory and research	Model for and support others as they develop and articulate a philosophy of early childhood professional practice	Oversee the development of program philosophy and assist others as they develop and articulate a philosophy of early childhood professional practice

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<b>2.11 Foundations of Early Childhood Practice</b>	Demonstrate awareness of developmental milestones and good early childhood practice	Demonstrate understanding of major theories and principles of development and commit to using them to implement good early childhood practices	Identify historical, philosophical, psychological, and social foundations of education including early childhood education and help others understand their relevance to practice	Oversee continuous program improvement based upon current trends in early childhood practice and an understanding of the foundations of early childhood practice and education
<b>2.12 Balancing Work and Personal Growth</b>	Strive to prioritize responsibilities and balance daily commitments	Recognize causes and symptoms of “burnout” and develop strategies to prevent it	Model behaviors that promote the ability to balance responsibilities and make choices that minimize staff stress	Develop and implement personnel practices that promote staff morale by listening carefully to concerns of assistants/staff members and by taking initiative to continuously improve the work environment
<b>2.13 Continuous Professional Development</b>	Participate in professional development activities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend orientation</li> <li>• Read or view training materials on early childhood education and care</li> <li>• Consult with other professionals</li> <li>• Learn to do library and Internet research to explore information for immediate use and to expand knowledge base</li> </ul>	Have a professional development plan that includes acquiring additional knowledge and skills through activities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff development workshops</li> <li>• Professional organizations</li> <li>• Reading professional publications</li> <li>• Formal course work</li> <li>• Journaling and reflection</li> <li>• Seeking and using feedback from other professionals</li> </ul>	Explore models of professional development and promote others’ professional growth through modeling, consulting, and mentoring	Ensure that assistants and staff members develop and implement professional growth plans that reflect understandings of adult learning theory, personal and organizational change theory, and current research in early childhood education  Expand learning opportunities through use of traditional and electronic delivery systems
<b>3. Advocacy</b>				
<b>3.1 Communicating with the Broader Community</b>	Communicate clearly with parents and colleagues about early childhood practices	Participate in local community activities and share information about the early childhood profession	Communicate effectively as a speaker and writer, providing information about services and policies that affect young children and their families	Participate in the broader professional community and mentor other staff by providing opportunities for them to participate in regional or statewide councils that advocate high quality services and programs for young children and their families
<b>3.2 Understanding Professional Advocacy</b>	Be aware of state and local policies that affect children and families and work in the community to promote positive change	Promote quality in program regulation and other services for young children and their families	Identify community needs that affect children and advocate for programs and services to promote accessible and affordable quality services for children and their families to address those needs	Provide leadership in identifying community needs that affect children and in advocating for programs and services to promote accessible and affordable quality services for children and their families

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<b>4. Ethics</b>				
<b>4.1 Ethics in Communications and Interactions</b>	Abide by the professional code of ethics for early childhood care and education that prohibits interacting in any way that is physically or emotionally harmful, disrespectful, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children and their families	<p>Demonstrate ethical behavior by following all applicable early childhood care and education regulations and adhering to a professional code of ethics</p> <p>Engage in study or discussions that provide a conceptual and structural basis for analyzing ethical issues and making informed choices when confronting ethical dilemmas</p>	Articulate and use a professional code of ethics and be able to explain its relevance and importance to new practitioners and to the general public	<p>Nurture other professionals in their articulation and use of professional code of ethics</p> <p>Initiate and mediate group problem solving of ethical dilemmas</p>
<b>4.2 Ethics Pertaining to Confidentiality</b>	Behave ethically, protecting confidentiality of written and spoken information	Recognize potential violations of confidentiality and take steps to mitigate the situation	Model and help others acquire skills for appropriate protection and release of confidential information	Ensure that the program has policies regarding treatment of confidential information and share this with others
<b>4.3 Commitment to Other Professionals</b>	<p>Advocate for policies and services that improve the quality of life for practitioners in the early childhood profession</p> <p>Recognize the physical and emotional demands of conscientious practice</p> <p>Develop strategies to maintain personal well-being and to provide support to colleagues in times of stress</p>	<p>Advocate for livable wages and societal esteem for early childhood professionals</p> <p>Nurture and support colleagues, assisting them to avoid burnout by finding ways for professional and personal renewal</p>	<p>Provide support to assistants/colleagues as they develop skills to advocate for policies that improve the early childhood profession</p> <p>Anticipate the strains and disappointments of the profession and develop services and strategies to support and preserve staffs' resiliency, commitment, and effectiveness</p>	Provide leadership for activities that demonstrate commitment to other early childhood professionals