

# Core Knowledge and Competencies

West Virginia's Core Knowledge and Competencies  
for Early Childhood Professionals



2015



Early Childhood  
Advisory Council  
*of West Virginia*

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# Introduction

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*West Virginia's Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* outlines recommended practices for professionals who work directly with young children. This core body of knowledge offers a road map for building meaningful relationships with children, families and colleagues; creating nurturing, stimulating environments; and developing oneself as a professional in this important field.

The Core Knowledge and Competencies can be used to:

- Inform the daily practice of professionals who work directly with young children, and to promote self-reflection and intentional professional development planning;
- Guide program administrators and directors in assessing staff performance, identifying areas for professional development, and creating/reviewing job descriptions;
- Aid training organizations in evaluating and developing professional development opportunities;
- Assist teacher education programs in assessing, coordinating, and designing course content that will meet competency needs and facilitate transfer and articulation agreements;
- Support local and state agencies when developing policy, initiatives, and funding decisions that improve the skills of early childhood professionals; and/or
- Support public and private investments, incentives, and initiatives that encourage and build professional competency.

**Here are some ways to effectively incorporate the Core Knowledge and Competencies into various early childhood environments:**

**Directors and program administrators** are encouraged to reflect on the competencies and consider how policies and practices within their program are aligned with the Core Knowledge and Competencies. The competencies will also help program leaders avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach to professional development. Factors such as the number of years in the early childhood field, personal history, and educational background influence a staff member’s performance. Each staff member needs developmentally appropriate and individualized learning. Directors and administrators will want to use the Professional Development Planning Tool (found in the back of the book) as a guide for supervisory discussions, performance appraisals, and staff development planning that is responsive to the needs of individual learners.

**Higher education faculty** will want to include the Core Knowledge and Competencies in coursework, including fieldwork and evaluation of students’ understanding of essential competencies. Early Childhood Education departments might evaluate current course offerings and identify which areas of the Core Knowledge and Competencies are not addressed, leading to future course development. Further, faculty advisors are encouraged to use the core competencies to guide their observations and discussions with student teachers, using the Professional Development Planning Tool to set achievable, measurable goals.

**Providers of professional development** will use the Core Knowledge and Competencies to reflect on their knowledge and skills and to plan for their own professional development as they include the competencies into train-

ing outlines and presentations. It is essential professional development providers (including coaches, consultants, and mentors) use the Core Knowledge and Competencies to assess learning needs and strengthen curriculum development and/or individualized work with early childhood professionals.

**Early childhood professionals who work directly with young children and families** have a variety of ways to use the Core Knowledge and Competencies. The document can be used as a self-assessment tool to chart career development based on strengths, interests, and areas of opportunity. Others might choose to consider just one area or competency at a time and reflect on their own knowledge and skills. An early childhood professional can identify areas of strength, as well as competency areas to learn more about, practice, and improve. The content of the Core Knowledge and Competencies might prompt some to form informal study or discussion groups. All early childhood professionals are encouraged to use the Professional Development Planning Tool in conjunction with a performance appraisal with their supervisor or in consultation with a mentor, faculty advisor, or coach.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation criteria and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices provided the foundation for these competencies. *The Core Body of Knowledge: New York State's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators* document was used as a primary resource for adapting core competencies and content.

# West Virginia's Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals

*West Virginia's Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* is organized into seven core knowledge content areas. Within each core knowledge content area are core competencies, which give examples of the behaviors and skills that may be seen in each content area.

## ***Core Knowledge Area 1:***

### **Child Growth and Development**

Early childhood professionals base their practice on an understanding of all of the ways that children change over time, including expected patterns of development and the ways that individual children differ. They also provide opportunities for young children to grow and develop, incorporating different modes of learning and different ways of representing knowledge and skills.

## ***Core Knowledge Area 2:***

### **Family and Community Relationships**

Early childhood professionals understand how important it is to know the family, culture, and community context in which each child lives. They also know that developing strong, positive connections to families and community resources benefit children.

## ***Core Knowledge Area 3:***

### **Child Observation and Assessment**

Early childhood professionals partner with families to continually gather and apply information about each child's unique growth and development.

## ***Core Knowledge Area 4:***

### **Environment and Curriculum**

Early childhood professionals appreciate their role as designer and builder of the world in which each child and family is able to thrive while participating in an early

childhood program. They also understand the affect of children's experiences, environments, and relationships with others on their well-being, development, and learning.

## ***Core Knowledge Area 5:***

### **Health, Safety, and Nutrition**

Early childhood professionals know the importance of children's physical well-being as a basic and necessary foundation for all growth, development, and learning.

## ***Core Knowledge Area 6:***

### **Professionalism and Leadership**

Early childhood professionals see themselves as members of a larger professional community and accept the responsibilities that go along with being a positive role model and a positive contributor to the profession.

## ***Core Knowledge Area 7:***

### **Administration and Management**

Early childhood professionals understand the importance of organizational management in creating quality programs that provide a nurturing environment for all children and families.

Each content area also includes three sections:

1. **Rationale** – Connects current research and standards of practice to the importance of each content area
2. **Knowledge Base** – Outlines concepts and facts that each professional must learn in each content area
3. **Core Competency** – Defines observable skills and behaviors that each early childhood professional should demonstrate and practice

Each core competency reveals several layers including knowledge, dispositions, and the ability to implement specific strategies and approaches. For example, in order to effectively encourage children’s social and emotional development, a professional must understand the theories of social and emotional development, show a caring disposition, and be able to implement specific strategies and practices. Because of these layers, the competencies are not organized in terms of level, as was the case in previous editions. Instead, professionals are encouraged to consider the competencies as recommended practices, assess their level of competency, and consider how to build and/or enrich their skills and ability.

## Dispositions

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Every profession has a core group of attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives that unify its members. These attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives are called “dispositions.” The early childhood profession also has dispositions that are highly valued within the early childhood field. Dispositions are different than knowledge and competencies. Dispositions are reflected in how a person views all aspects of the work within the early childhood field, rather than facts and knowledge. Because dispositions are not formally taught, they are often absorbed by newcomers and nurtured by seasoned professionals.

Dispositions that are highly valued within the early childhood field, include one who:

- delights in and is curious about children and how they grow and learn.
- appreciates and supports the unique and vital role of parents in their children’s lives.
- is eager to learn new knowledge and skills that will support young children’s development and learning.
- models the attitudes and behaviors that she/he values in children.
- values and celebrates the diversity found among all children and their families, and in the world around them.
- is willing to ask for help, learn from others, and accept constructive criticism.
- reflects on the personal beliefs and values that influence her/his own attitudes and practices.
- accepts responsibility for her/his own actions.
- shows respect for children, families, and colleagues by maintaining confidentiality.
- communicates clearly, respectfully, and effectively with children and adults.
- responds to challenges and changes with flexibility, perseverance, and cooperation.
- expresses her/his own emotions in healthy and constructive ways.
- values and nurtures imagination, creativity, and play, both in children and in herself/himself.
- demonstrates responsible professional and personal habits in working and interacting with others.
- has a collaborative attitude.

# Core Beliefs

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## Overarching Considerations

Some aspects of professional practice reach across all seven content areas. All areas of the Core Knowledge and Competencies incorporate the following considerations:

- the inclusion of children with special needs;
- how the influences of culture, family structure, and/or religion impact children and families; and
- the responsibility of the early childhood professional in guiding young children's overall development.

<b>Core Beliefs</b> <i>Adapted from The Core Body of Knowledge: New York State's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, published by NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute</i>	
● Children are born ready to learn.	● Children's learning is active and follows a recurring path: awareness, exploration, inquiry, and application.
● Every human being is a unique individual, with diverse modes of learning and expression as well as interests and strengths.	● Children learn best when engaged in high-quality environments, interactions, and relationships.
● Children are worthy of the same respect as adults.	● Children learn best when the adults in their life work in partnership with one another.
● Children's needs for shelter and for physical, intellectual, emotional, and social nourishment must be met for them to grow, develop, and learn to their fullest potential.	● All children and their families, regardless of their ethnic origins, value systems, faiths, customs, languages, and compositions, must be equally respected.
● Children have the right to secure, trusting relationships with adults and to safe, nurturing environments.	● Families and children have the right to support systems that foster their growth and development.
● Children construct their own knowledge based on their curiosity and driven by their interests. This active construction is facilitated by interaction with adults and other children.	● Teaching and learning are dynamic, integrated, and reciprocal processes.

# 1. Child Growth and Development



An in-depth knowledge of how children grow and develop is the key to quality early childhood practice. It is the foundation for designing environments and curriculum, for observing and assessing, and for responding to diverse learners. Early childhood professionals and families must understand developmental stages and milestones in order to thoughtfully plan experiences that help all children feel successful, identify interests, and develop a sense of personal identity.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) states that developmentally appropriate practice is rooted in knowledge, not assumptions. By following developmentally appropriate practices, early childhood professionals will ensure that goals and experiences meet the needs and development of all children, while providing opportunities to challenge children to promote their progress and encourage their interests.



# 1. Child Growth and Development

## Knowledge Base

**In order for children to thrive in early childhood programs, professionals who provide services to young children and their families must strive to know and understand:**

- The principles and theories of child growth and development, including:
  - The connection between content areas
  - Developmental sequences, stages, and milestones
  - Different rates of development in individual children
  - Current research and theory on child growth and development
- That children's early relationships and experiences with their family, language, culture, and the environment affect development
- How attachment greatly impacts all areas of development
- How self-regulation affects all areas of development and behavior
- That caring, consistent relationships with adults provide external supports that serve as the basis for developing self-regulation
- The importance of respectful language and communication between children and adults, and among children, for healthy growth and development
- How children's pro-social behavior is supported by adults who model positive behavior and view challenging behavior as a learning opportunity
- Appropriate strategies for responding to the differing developmental needs of all children
- How play provides the opportunity for young children to grow and develop, incorporating different modes of learning and different ways of representing knowledge and demonstrating skills
- That the early childhood profession has a growing knowledge base of research and theory that guides developmentally appropriate practice

# 1. Child Growth and Development

## Core Competencies

### The early childhood professional working with children:

- 1.1 Understands typical and atypical development and multiple factors that influence development from conception through infancy and early childhood
- 1.2 Applies the process of assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation to support children's growth through developmentally appropriate practices
- 1.3 Encourages children's development of social and emotional skills
- 1.4 Helps children achieve self-regulation and develop coping skills
- 1.5 Encourages the development of self-help skills to promote independence
- 1.6 Supports children's gross and fine motor development
- 1.7 Supports children's cognitive development
- 1.8 Promotes emergent literacy including speaking, listening, reading, and writing through play and interaction with children
- 1.9 Encourages and supports Dual Language Learners
- 1.10 Facilitates children's play to encourage development across domains

## 1.1 Understands typical and atypical development and multiple factors that influence development from conception through infancy and early childhood

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Understands the impact of physical health on children's social, emotional, cognitive, language, and motor development
- b. Recognizes the importance of fetal development and the connection to a child's long-term health and development
- c. Understands prenatal development and potential threats to the mother's and baby's health during the prenatal period
- d. Recognizes and addresses the attitudes, cultural contexts, or barriers that may impact a mother's decision to initiate or continue breastfeeding
- e. Applies theories of growth, development, and learning into everyday practices
- f. Understands parenting strengths that support a child's development
- g. Recognizes signs of resilience in the child and family and works with the family to strengthen protective factors
- h. Understands the impact of stress and trauma on a child's development and supports families in reducing children's exposure to stress
- i. Applies relationship-based practices and family-centered practices to support the family in reducing risks that may negatively affect child health and development
- j. Improves understanding of child growth and development through ongoing review of current research and observation of children
- k. Utilizes knowledge of child development and multiple factors influencing development while observing expectant parents, infants/toddlers, young children, and/or families
- l. Applies current knowledge and theories about specific developmental delays, developmental disabilities, and risk factors to advocate on behalf of young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families

## 1.2 Applies the process of assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation to support children's growth through developmentally appropriate practices

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

- a. Understands developmental sequences and milestones
- b. Recognizes and addresses how developmental variations and family culture, language, and environment influence a child's growth and development
- c. Uses observation and assessment processes to understand children's strengths, interests, and the skills they are working to master
- d. Discusses development with parents/caregivers to help them with recognizing their child's individuality and emerging milestones
- e. Works with families and related professionals to create goals for individual children and for groups of children
- f. Spends time in thoughtful preparation before implementing experiences and interventions
- g. Facilitates opportunities for children to learn and practice skills
- h. Evaluates how well planned experiences meet children's needs and interests
- i. Tracks and documents children's development using a variety of formal and/or informal assessment tools (i.e., screening tools, photography, video, anecdotal records, work samples, dictation, transcription)
- j. Applies knowledge of typical child development, including social and emotional development, to identify early indicators of possible developmental delays or risks to development
- k. Identifies children who may benefit from further professional support
- l. Finds the professional support children need to be successful, including educational and community supports and resources
- m. Works with other community agencies and services to help children meet developmental learning goals
- n. Contributes to writing, reviewing, and/ or implementing Individual Family Service Plan/ Individual Education Program, when appropriate
- o. Implements individualized interventions, modifications, and accommodations to help children meet developmental and learning goals, as needed
- p. Evaluates the effectiveness of interventions, modifications, and accommodations to help children meet developmental and learning goals

## 1.3 Encourages children's development of social and emotional skills

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Understands and accepts children's age-appropriate emotional responses (i.e., crying, tantrums)
- b. Considers temperament and individual differences when interacting with children and planning experiences
- c. Encourages pre/postnatal bonding
- d. Creates an environment and daily schedule that encourages trust and social interaction with other children and adults
- e. Helps children cope with separation and transition
- f. Uses tone, words, and gestures to let children know they are respected
- g. Provides opportunities for children to help, to make choices, and to do things for themselves
- h. Recognizes children's efforts rather than their accomplishments, intelligence, or personality
- i. Recognizes when children show self-discipline and self-control
- j. Finds ways to help children feel successful, identify and pursue interests, and develop a sense of personal identity
- k. Uses empathy to help children recognize and understand their emotions
- l. Helps children value their ethnic and cultural traditions, while respecting the views and experiences of others
- m. Encourages children to value and appreciate each other's strengths
- n. Helps children build upon their strengths and work on their challenges
- o. Models cooperative work and critical thinking skills to help children problem-solve and resolve conflict
- p. Encourages cooperative work or play
- q. Provides families with information and strategies to promote social and emotional development

## 1.4 Helps children achieve self-regulation and develop coping skills

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Responds promptly to child's immediate signals and needs
- b. Provides opportunities for children to make meaningful choices
- c. Understands the parent's/caregiver's role in supporting the child's development of self-regulation
- d. Encourages children to increase independence with self-help skills (i.e., eating, toileting, dressing)
- e. Creates an environment and provides strategies that help children:
  - Manage strong emotions and calm themselves
  - Focus their attention to remain actively engaged with activities and materials
  - Read the signals of the environment to learn how to respond appropriately
  - Cope with fear, anger, and frustration
  - Use language to share their needs
  - Consider the needs of others
  - Use problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies
- f. Provides appropriate guidance to assist children in understanding the results of their actions
- g. Recognizes that a child's ability to exercise self-regulation and control over his/her body functions, emotions, and behavior emerges over time as a developmental process
- h. Analyzes and adjusts expectations and activities based on the child's ongoing needs and energy levels
- i. Provides an adequate level of stimulation for children, keeping them interested without overwhelming them
- j. Investigates and provides for children's sensory preferences

## 1.5 Encourages the development of self-help skills to promote independence

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Understands the importance of promoting healthy living habits such as hand-washing, toothbrushing, positive toileting practices, and healthy eating
- b. Uses naturally occurring opportunities throughout the day to encourage the development of self-help skills
- c. Understands that toilet training should not be initiated until the child is developmentally ready
- d. Discusses and agrees upon toilet training methods with the parent and communicates frequently on progress and challenges

## 1.6 Supports children's gross and fine motor development

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Creates an environment that supports a variety and range of motor skills
- b. Creates opportunities for children to practice skills supporting the age-appropriate development of coordination, balance, movement, and strength:
  - Locomotor skills: rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, climbing, hopping, galloping, skipping
  - Stability skills: turning, twisting, sitting, bending, stretching, reaching, lifting, balancing
  - Object control: grasp and release, bilateral use of body, midline, construction, ball play
- c. Encourages indoor and outdoor environments that allow children to move freely
- d. Ensures children spend time each day in active gross motor play, recognizing outdoors as the preferred environment
- e. Supports children in their search of reasonable physical challenges
- f. Provides opportunities and materials that encourage sensory integration



## 1.7 Supports children's cognitive development

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Engages children in conversations
- b. Understands the foundations of cognitive development including the importance of joint attention, imitation, and cause and effect
- c. Creates environments that encourage developmentally appropriate exploration of toys, objects, and materials
- d. Plans experiences to support a child's developing interests and build on previous learning
- e. Engages children in activities to support the development of play and problem-solving skills
- f. Encourages each child's creativity through artistic representation
- g. Provides opportunities for children to explore math and science concepts found in daily activities
- h. Uses open-ended questions to encourage child-initiated interactions

## 1.8 Promotes emergent literacy including speaking, listening, reading, and writing through play and interaction with children

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Understands that early literacy skills begin in infancy
- b. Creates an environment where children have access to a variety of developmentally appropriate objects and materials to support early and emergent literacy
- c. Provides opportunities for children to see adults reading and using written language for a variety of purposes
- d. Promotes an environment where children are encouraged to listen and communicate with others
- e. Provides experiences that encourage exploration of appropriate print materials and storytelling
- f. Provides experiences that encourage children to develop drawing, pre-writing, and writing skills using a variety of tools
- g. Provides a variety of opportunities for children to develop vocabulary and build knowledge through shared reading

## 1.9 Encourages and supports Dual Language Learners

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Recognizes the major differences and similarities between various cultural groups within the early childhood setting
- b. Uses knowledge of the cultural characteristics of the Dual Language Learning population to enhance learning
- c. Supports the variable rate of individual language development and communication strategies used by children as they acquire the English language
- d. Includes both adult-directed and child-directed activities for social, emotional, and language development, allowing for Dual Language Learners to express and explore their personal creativity and curiosity
- e. Provides a language rich environment using “natural” language and communication patterns to support and develop the vocabulary and knowledge base of children learning English
- f. Incorporates strategies to support Dual Language Learners’ literacy development in the following areas: oral language development, phonological awareness, written expression, motivation to read aloud, and letter knowledge

## 1.10 Facilitates children's play to encourage development across domains

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Invites children to initiate and design their own play
- b. Responds to children's needs and interests as they play
- c. Joins children's play only when the adult's participation will enhance the child's play
- d. Teaches children how to enter a play group, how to invite other children to play, and how to organize play with their peers
- e. Teaches children how to be peer models for play
- f. Provides guidance to each child during play
- g. Assists children in sharing toys and materials with one another and teaches children how to take turns
- h. Encourages and engages families and other children to join in the child's play

## 2. Family and Community Relationships



Families are a social unit that can be big, small, extended, nuclear, or multi-generational. Families may include children and adults living in the same household, adults who are responsible for the long-term care and well-being of the child, a child's legal guardian, and/or parents who may not live in the same household as the child. A child's growth and development is heavily influenced by family and community relationships. For that reason, it is critical that early childhood professionals value children and families and are knowledgeable and respectful of individual cultures, home relationships, and community relationships. Evidence-based research has shown for children's successful development, strong partnerships between families and communities must have supportive, interactive communication. For these partnerships to be successful, early childhood professionals should be aware of their community and appropriate linkages, understand the importance of community collaborations, and strive to establish respectful relationships that empower families.

## 2. Family and Community Relationships

### Knowledge Base

**In order for children to thrive in early childhood programs, professionals who provide services to young children and their families must strive to know and understand:**

- That families are children's first and primary teacher and be supportive of this role
- The role families contribute to their child's growth and development is critical
- The importance of empowering families in decision-making
- The importance of establishing a strong partnership with families
- Multiple communication skills and strategies to encourage ongoing family involvement
- How to establish effective problem-solving and conflict resolution skills
- The critical role of supporting cultural diversity in families and communities
- How community resources and referrals can strengthen the connections between families and community

## 2. Family and Community Relationships

### Core Competencies

#### **The early childhood professional working with children:**

- 2.1 Respects families and is responsive to language, culture, family characteristics, needs, concerns, and priorities
- 2.2 Communicates regularly, respectfully, and effectively with families
- 2.3 Provides families with opportunities to learn and develop skills to help children achieve desired outcomes within the program, at home, and in the community
- 2.4 Helps connect families with needed resources and services
- 2.5 Supports families through transitions within and between programs and environments

## 2.1 Respects families and is responsive to language, culture, family characteristics, needs, concerns, and priorities

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Respects the family's right to voluntarily accept or decline services
- b. Respects families as the most important influence and decision-makers in a child's life
- c. Supports and respects families' safety, health, financial stability, early care and education, life goals, and aspirations
- d. Recognizes and acknowledges that culture, language, socioeconomic factors, support systems, and special needs may influence how families nurture their children
- e. Understands, acknowledges, and supports families with emotions associated with grief, loss, and coping with a child's disability or challenges
- f. Empowers family strengths and supports diverse needs, including those of Dual Language Learners
- g. Takes time to learn about families' race, religion, home language, family structure, employment situation, other child care arrangements, as well as their values and beliefs about childhood, education, and intervention
- h. Recognizes the impact of substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental illness within families
- i. Recognizes the benefits of inclusion for children, families, early childhood professionals, and communities
- j. Responds sensitively to families' concerns, ways of coping, and child-rearing practices
- k. Shares community resources based on families' needs, including information about developmental delays and disabilities
- l. Engages in respectful, goal-oriented partnerships with families to promote parent-child relationships and family well-being
- m. Recognizes the impact of family stress on child development and family function and works closely with the family to link them to appropriate community resources



## 2.2 Communicates regularly, respectfully, and effectively with families

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Includes the program's philosophy about provider/family relationships into work with families
- b. Values families and welcomes them into the classroom, program, or home setting
- c. Provides clear and complete information in a manner that matches the family's learning style, preferred language, level of understanding, and preferred means of communication
- d. Communicates regularly with families to share the accomplishments of the child, answer questions, and discuss activities and progress
- e. Communicates the possibility of a developmental delay or special need sensitively and confidentially, provides documentation and explanation, suggests next steps, and provides resources for assessment
- f. Engages families in planning curriculum and activities, evaluating program outcomes, and planning transitions
- g. Seeks input and collaboration from all family members, including fathers, grandparents, and others
- h. Ensures services meet the individual needs and strengths of each family
- i. Uses surveys or other measurement tools to gather information and feedback from families

## 2.3 Provides families with opportunities to learn and develop skills to help children achieve desired outcomes within the program, at home, and in the community

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Engages families in a variety of meaningful opportunities to influence their child's care and education
- b. Empowers families to find ways to support their children as they develop (i.e., planning, goal setting)
- c. Promotes interaction between families and community
- d. Encourages families to use services for children in the community (i.e., library, story time, field trips)
- e. Works with families to include teaching and learning opportunities in natural ways throughout the child's day
- f. Empowers and coaches families to implement easy-to-use tools and strategies at home that achieve desired outcomes and goals
- g. Implements strength-based, family-centered practices that engage families in meaningful decision-making opportunities
- h. Uses coaching or consultation strategies with parents and other primary caregivers to teach intentionally designed instruction and to promote positive adult-child interactions

## 2.4 Helps connect families with needed resources and services

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Plans conferences, events, and activities that are based on family interest and schedules them for times that are convenient for families
- b. Provides opportunities for family-to-family gatherings and events
- c. Supports and encourages families to identify and use a network of formal and informal supports (i.e., neighborhood groups, faith/spiritual communities, civic organizations, parent support groups)
- d. Implements creative ways to provide families with support
- e. Helps families understand the special education referral and evaluation process, when applicable
- f. Advocates for needed services and resources for families
- g. Develops and maintains relationships with other professionals in related fields

## 2.5 Supports families through transitions within and between programs and environments

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Helps families and children understand and prepare for a change
- b. Engages families in preparation and planning for upcoming transitions
- c. Shares information and expectations of other settings, including enrollment and application processes
- d. Arranges family visits to other potential programs or settings
- e. Provides information and opportunities for families to create relationships with other families making a similar transition
- f. Helps children adjust to new schedules and routines

### 3. Child Observation and Assessment



Early childhood professionals are able to continually improve each child's care and learning experiences because they understand that every child follows a unique path of growth and development. Therefore, the process of regularly gathering evidence about each child's development will inform instruction and interactions, guide planning, and share progress with families, caregivers, and other pertinent team members.

### 3. Child Observation and Assessment

#### Knowledge Base

**In order for children to thrive in early childhood programs, professionals who provide services to young children and their families must strive to know and understand:**

- Child growth and development, including sequences of typical development
- How children's home language, culture, strengths, needs, preferences, genetics, and physical/social environment influences their development
- The goals, benefits, and appropriate uses of selected assessment practices
- The importance of maintaining confidentiality of child and family records and assessment information
- Multiple methods for collecting evidence to review children's strengths and challenges (i.e., running records, anecdotal information, portfolios, work samples)
- The importance of objective, culturally sensitive, non-biased documentation
- The relationship between planning for observation and assessment, and curriculum planning and instruction

### 3. Child Observation and Assessment

#### Core Competencies

#### The early childhood professional working with children:

- 3.1 Uses observation and assessment to support children's development and learning
- 3.2 Practices appropriate child assessment
- 3.3 Builds positive, productive partnerships with families and colleagues to enhance the assessment process
- 3.4 Uses data to share children's developmental progress with families and other pertinent team members
- 3.5 Uses observations and assessments to inform instruction and guide planning
- 3.6 Engages in additional practices to support formal evaluation and reporting procedures when determining support services (applicable to Assessment Teams)

### 3.1 Uses observation and assessment to support children's development and learning

#### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Knows strengths and limitations of a variety of screening and assessment tools
- b. Assesses children's progress across all developmental domains
- c. Uses multiple methods for gathering information and collecting data
- d. Gathers evidence of children's development and learning using multiple sources
- e. Develops and/or uses assessment practices that are aligned with applicable standards
- f. Maintains confidentiality and only shares identifying information with parental consent
- g. Uses assessment practices that are relevant to curriculum or program planning
- h. Shares and applies current theory, research, and policy on assessment through developmentally appropriate methods
- i. Uses assessment practices that are relevant to the language and developmental needs of individual children, as shown through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors



## 3.2 Practices appropriate child assessment

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Knows developmentally appropriate assessment methods
- b. Engages in assessment practices within children's familiar routines, materials, environments, and people, rather than in controlled situations
- c. Accommodates children's physical, temperamental, and sensory differences when engaging in assessment practices
- d. Considers children's strengths and needs across all developmental domains
- e. Reviews and considers information provided by the family and other sources to inform and individualize interactions
- f. Recognizes and responds to environmental factors that may place children at risk
- g. Involves other professionals, when appropriate, as partners in observation and assessment
- h. Makes referrals to appropriate agencies for diagnostic testing, as needed
- i. Shares specific assessment procedures with families
- j. Communicates developmental progress and outcomes to other involved colleagues, as appropriate, to ensure collaborative services

### 3.3 Builds positive, productive partnerships with families and colleagues to enhance the assessment process

#### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Is considerate to family culture, values, home language, and literacy level when sharing assessment procedures with families
- b. Engages families in discussion about the program's philosophy of assessment, the assessment process, and family participation
- c. Values family input in the assessment process
- d. Responds to family requests and decisions regarding their child's progress
- e. Includes family observations and input in the assessment process
- f. Gathers information from families regarding effective strategies to support individual children's developmental progress
- g. Promotes teamwork and positive communication between families, colleagues, and others regarding the assessment process

### 3.4 Uses data to share children's developmental progress with families and other pertinent team members

#### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Shares assessment results in a sensitive manner that is understandable for families
- b. Reports developmental accomplishments, as well as areas for developmental growth
- c. Provides documentation to show the connection between the developmental domains
- d. Works with families to develop goals and plans based on assessment results
- e. Shares and addresses the limitations of observation and assessment methods with families
- f. Communicates effectively the major theories, research, and issues in the context of children's developmental progress

### 3.5 Uses observations and assessments to inform instruction and guide planning

#### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Works with families to assess and adjust developmental and learning goals to meet the changing needs of the child and family
- b. Responds to the level of support an individual child needs to progress developmentally
- c. Uses ongoing assessment to ensure the environment, curriculum, guidance strategies, and approaches to learning meet children's needs
- d. Uses assessment practices to show developmental progress during daily routines and play
- e. Uses child observation and assessment to encourage positive interactions with peers
- f. Adapts guidance approaches to individual children based on observation

### 3.6\* Applicable to Assessment Teams: Engages in additional practices to support formal evaluation and reporting procedures when determining support services

*\*The behaviors and skills listed in 3.6 are specific to professionals working as part of an assessment team to evaluate children's needs for additional support services using formal assessment tools and evaluation procedures. It is expected that these professionals exhibit these behaviors and skills in addition to those listed in Core Competencies 3.1-3.5.*

#### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Ensures that one team member acts as the single point of contact for families
- b. Works with the family to plan the time, location, and assessment strategies for individual children
- c. Follows established timelines for beginning and completing the assessment process, reporting, and meeting with families
- d. Reviews information about a child's birth and developmental history, and other sources, before beginning formal evaluation
- e. Requests families share the concerns, hopes, and developmental goals they have for their children before creating an IFSP or IEP
- f. Includes children's developmental accomplishments, as well as areas for developmental growth
- g. Adheres to WV state and/or federal legal and procedural requirements when referring a family for additional services

## 4. Environment and Curriculum



High quality relationships and experiences result in better outcomes for children. Ensuring quality learning experiences involves careful planning, implementation, and evaluation not only on the content of such experiences, but also on the physical and social settings that surround them. Environment and curriculum are two important elements which together make up developmentally appropriate and emotionally responsive practice. It is recognized that not all early childhood professionals have direct control over the child's environment; however, the expectation is that all professionals will support families to understand the impact that the environment plays on the child's learning.

## 4. Environment and Curriculum

### Knowledge Base

**In order for children to thrive in early childhood programs, professionals who provide services to young children and their families must strive to know and understand:**

- The principles of developmentally appropriate practice
- Strategies for supporting various types of play and how to include learning in everyday routines and activities
- That continuous reflection on the effectiveness of the environment and experiences is needed in order to adapt to children's changing needs
- Their critical role in guiding relationships
- The importance of respecting, valuing, and accepting each child and treating every child with dignity at all times
- The importance of creating a bias-free, warm, and caring learning environment
- The importance of bringing each child's culture and language into the shared culture of the group
- The benefits and methods of modeling and encouraging behaviors that contribute to a supportive, inclusive sense of community
- The relationship between the physical environment and young children's behavior and learning
- How to plan and prepare a learning environment that nurtures children's initiative, encourages active exploration of materials, and supports engagement with activities and interaction with others based on the developmental needs of children
- How to maintain a safe and positive environment through careful supervision that anticipates and avoids problems before they occur
- The principles of integrating curriculum across all developmental domains
- Strategies to foster language development and early literacy throughout early childhood

## 4. Environment and Curriculum

### Core Competencies

#### **The early childhood professional working with children:**

- 4.1 Develops and models genuine, supportive relationships
- 4.2 Creates an environment that is predictable, promotes interaction and learning, and is responsive to the needs of all children
- 4.3 Works to effectively promote social and emotional development and prevent challenging behaviors
- 4.4 Establishes a learning environment within group settings that is well-organized and visually pleasing, and promotes reflection, extends learning, and encourages self-management and cooperation
- 4.5 Selects and implements developmentally appropriate, evidence-based curriculum
- 4.6 Designs and implements activities and strategies to help meet the individual needs of all children in an integrated curriculum



## 4.1 Develops and models genuine, supportive relationships

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Knows and honors the beliefs, values, and traditions of all children and their families
- b. Seeks information from families regarding effective strategies to support individual children
- c. Shows genuine interest in children's experiences, ideas, and work
- d. Uses a variety of strategies for building relationships such as engaging in meaningful and extended conversations, respecting each child's uniqueness, using children's names, being at children's eye level, and smiling at children
- e. Creates opportunities for children of different races, cultures, languages, abilities, and genders to work and play together
- f. Practices and models responsive, consistent, encouraging, and nurturing interactions that build positive relationships
- g. Uses child observation and assessment to individualize and improve interactions
- h. Recognizes strengths in every child and family and is able to communicate those strengths
- i. Accepts and responds appropriately to feedback from families
- j. Responds and adapts to each child, accommodating his/her temperament, personality, strengths, interests, and development pattern
- k. Encourages children's independence
- l. Respects children's choices and supports them in the decision-making process
- m. Engages in self-reflection regarding relationships with children on a regular basis

## 4.2 Creates an environment that is predictable, promotes interaction and learning, and is responsive to the needs of all children

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Plans, implements, and adapts a supportive learning environment that promotes children's safety, positive interactions, and behaviors
- b. Designs schedules that are predictable but flexible
- c. Establishes clear, consistent, and realistic boundaries based on developmentally appropriate expectations
- d. Makes sure expectations for routines and tasks are clear and purposeful for all children
- e. Teaches the steps involved in routines and tasks (i.e., repeats directions, provides visual support while giving directions, uses visual and/or verbal prompts to help children follow through when necessary)
- f. Uses a steady, calm tone and consistent, predictable signals when providing direction and redirection to children
- g. Uses a variety of strategies to engage and maintain children's attention and active participation
- h. Ensures materials reflect the languages and cultures represented in the program and uses them to reduce potential bias and discrimination
- i. Keeps transitions to a minimum and makes them short, meaningful, and consistent using clear visual and auditory signals to support children
- j. Uses positive guidance strategies to prevent challenging behavior from occurring and/or reoccurring
- k. Supports children and families through well-planned transitions
- l. Supports the practice of inclusion with typically developmental peers when inclusive practice would best meet the needs of the child
- m. Observes children and makes accommodations and modifications to ensure that all children participate meaningfully in the program
- n. Demonstrates knowledge and applies current theories and research on environmental design

### 4.3 Works to effectively promote social and emotional development and prevent challenging behaviors

#### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Provides diverse and developmentally appropriate materials to promote social interaction
- b. Supports environmental arrangements that promote social and emotional development (i.e., a quiet space for children to calm down)
- c. Develops clear and developmentally appropriate expectations with children and states them in a positive form (i.e., “walk please” vs. “no running”)
- d. Assesses the child and family’s status during each time together in order to address their needs
- e. Allows natural consequences to guide children’s behavior as much as possible, making sure the child understands the connection
- f. Models positive social interactions, such as friendship skills, empathy, and respect
- g. Models appropriate use of a variety of materials
- h. Provides children with time, space, trust, support, and guidance to assist them in finding their own solutions to social problems
- i. Supports children in communicating their thoughts and emotions with peers and adults in ways that help them feel competent
- j. Teaches children effective and socially appropriate ways to meet their wants and needs
- k. Knows when to intervene to stop behavior that affects safety and/or ability to learn (i.e., bullying, rejecting others)
- l. Remains calm and respectful toward the child exhibiting challenging behavior
- m. Uses a consistent process of reflection and action to address challenging behavior
- n. Allows time for the child to regain composure following challenging behavior
- o. Addresses challenging behavior with the child, privately, with sensitivity and respect, following the incident
- p. Applies logical consequences, when appropriate, that are related to the challenging behavior and its function, that are respectful to the child, and are reasonable

- q. Understands children's temperaments (i.e., activity level, adaptability, persistence) and responds to challenging behavior in ways that match the child's temperament
- r. Considers developmental delays, health/medical issues, family circumstances, or whether a child is trying to establish a sense of belonging by exhibiting challenging behavior and chooses a response or solution that matches that need
- s. Participates in development and implementation of child specific strategies as identified within a child's Positive Behavior Support Plan

**The following behaviors and skills are specific to professionals who have completed specialized training in the facilitation of functional behavior assessment and the development, implementation, and analysis of Positive Behavior Support Plans. It is expected that these professionals exhibit these behaviors and skills in addition to those listed above.**

- t. Puts together a team, which includes families and professionals, to complete a Functional Behavior Assessment and develop a Positive Behavior Support Plan
- u. Identifies and describes the challenging behavior as the first step in using a Functional Behavior Assessment
- v. Uses Functional Behavior Assessment as a resource to determine the "function" of a challenging behavior (the purpose a challenging behavior serves for the child)
- w. Identifies what happens right before (antecedent) and what happens right after (consequence) challenging behavior occurs
- x. Respects each family's knowledge of their own child and assists the family in using that knowledge to develop appropriate guidance
- y. Helps individuals understand that challenging behaviors have different causes and guides them to respond with positive guidance techniques
- z. Develops a Positive Behavior Support Plan with the team
  - aa. Collects and analyzes data to make decisions
  - bb. Evaluates the Positive Behavior Support Plan on a regular basis to make appropriate modifications, accommodations, and interventions as necessary

#### 4.4 Establishes a learning environment within group settings that is well-organized and visually pleasing, and promotes reflection, extends learning, and encourages self-management and cooperation\* (Relates to group settings)

##### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Designs an environment to include:
  - personal space for each child to ensure his/her sense of belonging and security
  - both active and quiet spaces
  - large muscle activity and movement spaces
  - adequate space for walkways, as well as gathering and work spaces
  - clear boundaries in the physical environment that help children know where centers begin and end
  - appropriate child-sized furniture
  - unobstructed views of all areas within the space
  - space for child selected grouping
  - space that is inviting to families
  - private meeting space
- b. Maintains a space that is clean, organized, and free of clutter
- c. Selects materials that foster discovery, inquiry, imagination, creativity, and actively support a variety of goals
- d. Organizes and places materials within children's reach to promote engagement and learning
- e. Uses visual signs, including pictures and word labels, to define play areas and storage of materials
- f. Provides a variety of developmentally appropriate books, pictures, and print materials
- g. Selects and organizes child related displays that are relevant and visually appealing
- h. Adds or removes materials available related to children's interests, development, level of stimulation, and curriculum content
- i. Adapts materials to accommodate for children with special needs

## 4.5 Selects and implements developmentally appropriate, evidence-based curriculum

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Adopts or develops curriculum that has clearly defined relevant goals, based on sound understanding of child development
- b. Uses curriculum
  - as a flexible framework for planning how to meet children’s learning and developmental goals
  - to promote social interaction, child-directed learning, play, and creative expression
  - to plan engaging experiences to help children achieve curriculum goals
- c. Implements curriculum in ways that are responsive to families’ home culture, values, and language
- d. Offers opportunities for families to actively participate in curriculum planning and implementation
- e. Plans trips into the community or to places that reflect the cultures of the community, classroom, or program
- f. Gives children opportunities to work on integrated projects and investigations that span several days in length
- g. Uses ongoing assessment to monitor children’s progression toward curriculum goals

## 4.6 Designs and implements activities and strategies to help meet the individual needs of all children in an integrated curriculum

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Designs and implements a child-centered environment that encourages autonomy, responsibility, and positive social skills through unplanned and planned activities
- b. Uses ongoing observation and assessment to meet a child's interests/curiosity, learning styles, temperament, strengths and challenges, family priorities, current environment(s)
- c. Ensures that child-directed and adult-facilitated play and learning are part of the curriculum
- d. Values and encourages inquiry by posing problems and asking questions that provoke children's thinking and curiosity
- e. Includes comprehensive health and nutritional practices in daily activities and routines
- f. Uses appropriate small group experiences to encourage social interaction and problem-solving
- g. Builds on children's natural curiosity, deepens children's knowledge and awareness, and sustains active engagement with ideas and materials
- h. Assists children in applying the skills they learn by including intervention into daily routines and activities
- i. Helps children express ideas and apply prior knowledge by extending an activity in which they show interest
- j. Encourages children to express themselves through visual arts, music, movement, and dramatic play
- k. Provides opportunities for children to practice emerging skills by revisiting experiences and materials
- l. Uses authentic assessment information to adapt the level of support, strategies, and materials necessary to meet a child's individual needs
- m. Selects and uses technology and media tools that have a clearly defined purpose and connection to the curriculum; promotes interaction, communication, and collaboration; and is developmentally appropriate
- n. Utilizes assistive technology to support individual learning needs by first considering the simplest and least intrusive while collaborating with families to ensure consistent and appropriate use
- o. Demonstrates knowledge and applies current theory and research on evidence-based practices, including assistive technology

- p. Works as a team with related professionals to implement the accommodations and modifications recommended on a child's IFSP or IEP, when applicable
- q. Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and applies current research and effective practices on use of technology



## 5. Health, Safety, and Nutrition



Children's health and safety is the first and foremost responsibility of adults who provide care for them. Health and safety is vital for fostering competence in all developmental domains. During pregnancy and in the early years of life, each child must be provided the opportunity for optimum health and well-being. Early childhood professionals must know and understand how to ensure that children are safe, how to promote sound health practices, and how to recognize and respond to child abuse and neglect. Early childhood professionals understand that the standards of health, safety, and nutrition are constantly evolving.

For this reason, it is of vital importance that all early childhood professionals stay up-to-date on current standards through ongoing and recurring training.

## 5. Health, Safety, and Nutrition

### Knowledge Base

**In order for children to thrive in early childhood programs, professionals who provide services to young children and their families must strive to know and understand:**

- Practices that encourage positive health behaviors and support the physical and mental well-being of children and families
- That early childhood professionals are partners with families and the community in assuring optimal health, safety, and nutrition for children
- The importance of communicating, teaching, and modeling best practices in health, safety, and nutrition to children and their families
- That each child has individualized health care needs
- The appropriate precautions and applicable procedures to ensure a safe learning environment
- That safety risks change with children's developmental level
- The appropriate procedures for emergencies and injuries
- The impact of child abuse and neglect and domestic violence on children and families
- The importance of good nutrition and food safety to support healthy growth in children and families
- That nutrition has an impact on children's social, emotional, and cultural development, as well as physical development
- The importance of healthy lifestyles to support healthy growth in children and families
- The importance of oral health as a component of overall child health
- The necessity of maintaining records related to the health, safety, and nutrition of children and families

## 5. Health, Safety, and Nutrition

### Core Competencies

#### The early childhood professional working with children:

- 5.1 Identifies practices that encourage positive health behaviors and support the physical and mental well-being of children and families
- 5.2 Understands the appropriate precautions and applicable procedures to ensure a safe learning environment
- 5.3 Understands the appropriate procedures for emergencies and injuries
- 5.4 Understands the impact of child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, and domestic violence on children and families
- 5.5 Understands the importance of good nutrition and food safety to support healthy growth in children and families
- 5.6 Understands the importance of healthy lifestyles to support healthy growth in children and families
- 5.7 Understands the necessity of maintaining records related to the health, safety, and nutrition of children and families

## 5.1 Identifies practices that encourage positive health behaviors and support the physical and mental well-being of children and families

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Models good health practices including universal/standard precautions, hand washing, hygiene, and oral health
- b. Provides intentional learning opportunities for children and families to understand the basics of healthy behaviors
- c. Promotes the appropriate use of healthcare systems including the establishment of a medical home, up-to-date immunizations, and screenings
- d. Recognizes and responds to signs and symptoms of common childhood illnesses
- e. Refers families to appropriate health care resources
- f. Assures the appropriate implementation of medical and physical care plans
- g. Communicates health concerns and findings to families in a non-threatening manner
- h. Collaborates with other agencies and families to provide resources and support for healthy lifestyles
- i. Recognizes the need to prevent the spread of communicable disease in the work environment through the use of infection control measures (i.e., isolation and exclusion of infected children and adults)

## 5.2 Understands the appropriate precautions and applicable procedures to ensure a safe learning environment

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Follows current emergency procedures and safety practices
- b. Observes and acts to avoid problems before they occur, adjusting supervision to meet different ages and abilities
- c. Ensures all materials and equipment for use by children, both indoors and outdoors, are safe
- d. Understands the importance of appropriate and safe medication administration policies and procedures and best practice guidelines
- e. Shares information with families and relevant staff about safe and appropriate activities according to the child's stage of development
- f. Understands and follows safe sleep practices and communicates information to families
- g. Provides intentional opportunities for children to learn the basics of safety practices through active learning activities
- h. Understands the importance of additional safety precautions during field trips and trips around the neighborhood
- i. Reports or discusses safety concerns with appropriate staff and family and helps problem-solve and implement solutions
- j. Works with families to monitor their home for safety risks

## 5.3 Understands the appropriate procedures for emergencies and injuries

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Maintains and follows emergency preparedness plans including updated emergency contact information
- b. Maintains a first aid kit and applies first aid in emergency situations
- c. Recognizes the importance of including health and safety precautions in daily routines, drills, and emergency situations
- d. Follows procedures for interacting with persons who pose security risks
- e. Reviews established emergency procedures and safety practices and updates, as necessary

## 5.4 Understands the impact of child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, and domestic violence on children and families

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Recognizes signs and indicators of child abuse and neglect
- b. Recognizes role as mandated reporter and follows programmatic procedures for reporting child abuse and neglect
- c. Knows and follows state and federally mandated child abuse and neglect regulations
- d. Recognizes signs and symptoms of substance abuse
- e. Recognizes signs and indicators of domestic violence
- f. Provides families with positive discipline and coping strategies
- g. Works with families to develop safety plans
- h. Works with other agencies to provide comprehensive support to families
- i. Acts as a resource and advocate for public education for the prevention of child abuse and neglect and domestic violence
- j. Recognizes and understands the importance of increasing the protective factors that strengthen families and communities

## 5.5 Understands the importance of good nutrition and food safety to support healthy growth in children and families

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

---

- a. Promotes and models healthy nutritional practices
- b. Practices appropriate hand washing and food handling techniques
- c. Matches nutritional practices to the child's developmental stage and special dietary needs including health conditions, and cultural and religious dietary restrictions
- d. Shares information on the advantages of breastfeeding and provides support for breastfeeding
- e. Shares information on nutritional needs and appropriate feeding of infants and children
- f. Understands that food is not to be used as a punishment or reward
- g. Encourages self-regulation by helping early childhood professionals and children recognize fullness cues and responding appropriately
- h. Facilitates opportunities for children to experience new tastes, textures, and cultural foods
- i. Encourages a relaxed, positive, and social atmosphere during meals
- j. Provides intentional opportunities for children and families to learn the basics of nutrition through active learning activities
- k. Engages children and families in discussion about foods that help them grow and stay healthy, and how to choose snacks and meals wisely
- l. Links families to community resources to address feeding concerns, as appropriate



## 5.6 Understands the importance of healthy lifestyles to support healthy growth in children and families

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Shares the basics of healthy living through active learning experiences with children and families
- b. Encourages and provides children with developmentally appropriate physical activity through unstructured and structured play
- c. Understands the importance of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) to support a healthy lifestyle
- d. Understands the importance of daily outdoor play, as weather permits
- e. Encourages and provides ideas for fun ways that families can engage in physical activity
- f. Understands the importance of limited electronic media for children

## 5.7 Understands the necessity of maintaining records related to the health, safety, and nutrition of children and families

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Assures appropriate and accurate documentation is maintained to meet all legislation, regulations, and professional standards
- b. Maintains the confidentiality of health care records
- c. Maintains and understands the importance of keeping health, safety, and nutritional records on children organized, accessible, and up-to-date

## 6. Professionalism and Leadership



Professionalism in the field of early childhood requires a commitment to providing the highest possible quality services to children and their families, to life-long personal and professional growth and learning, and to ethical conduct. This commitment is the basis for reflective practice. Professionalism involves collaboration and embracing responsibility. It involves having the curiosity and drive to search for information in order to gain an understanding of important issues, relating to the education of children and support of families. It also involves the ability to advocate for children and families, and for high-quality early care and education services.

Leadership traditionally represents a position of authority; however, leadership is frequently found in individuals regardless of title or status. Leadership qualities of vision, skill, and resourcefulness provide an inspirational awareness and a sense of security to others. Professionals exhibiting encouragement, motivation, and enthusiasm help others grow, and as a result, actively shape the platform of the profession as one of quality, responsibility, and accountability. Providing vision, expressing high expectations, and demonstrating mutual respect for all parties involved symbolizes effective leadership.

## 6. Professionalism and Leadership

### Knowledge Base

**In order for children to thrive in early childhood programs, professionals who provide services to young children and their families must strive to know and understand:**

- That professional development is the foundation for knowing how to create experiences and interactions that help children reach their potential
- The importance of communicating research, theory, and professional guidelines as the basis for practice
- How to make decisions based on the most current recommended practices, professional standards, and research
- The value of always seeking to increase one's own knowledge and skills
- How to find opportunities to develop personally and professionally
- The ethical responsibilities of the early childhood community and their impact on children, families, colleagues, and the community
- How to ethically advocate for children and families

## 6. Professionalism and Leadership

### Core Competencies

#### The early childhood professional working with children:

- 6.1 Upholds all relevant ethical standards and professional guidelines
- 6.2 Demonstrates dispositions necessary to effectively support children and families
- 6.3 Displays professionalism in practice
- 6.4 Exhibits commitment to ongoing growth and learning
- 6.5 Shows leadership skills
- 6.6 Advocates for children, families, and the early childhood profession
- 6.7 Collaborates among agencies

## 6.1 Upholds all relevant ethical standards and professional guidelines

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Meets or exceeds the minimum requirements needed for their position, as applicable
- b. Understands and follows relevant regulatory and program licensing, certification and training requirements, and requirements of funders, if applicable
- c. Obeys and upholds laws related to the rights and well-being of all children and families, including those with disabilities
- d. Maintains job-specific professional and personal boundaries, and models those appropriate boundaries
- e. Shows sensitivity relating to individual preferences and/or cultural beliefs
- f. Knows and practices the ethical responsibilities in the applicable code of ethical conduct (i.e., NAEYC, NASW, CEC/DEC) and recognizes the difference between ethics and personal values
- g. Upholds standards of confidentiality, sensitivity, and respect for children, families, and colleagues
- h. Uses relevant professional standards and guidelines to plan and implement experiences for children and families
- i. Maintains a developmentally and culturally appropriate environment and curriculum based on basic principles and theories of child growth and development
- j. Recognizes and responds to any practices or materials that are inappropriate, potentially discriminatory, or harmful

## 6.2 Demonstrates dispositions necessary to effectively support children and families

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Conducts work and related tasks in a reliable, thorough, and efficient manner
- b. Develops appropriate and positive relationships by engaging and responding to children, families, professionals, and community
- c. Demonstrates flexibility and is open to change
- d. Involves and works with others in planning, problem-solving, and implementing effective practices
- e. Places the needs of the learner and/or learning task above self
- f. Is able to tolerate stress and maintain a stable environment
- g. Demonstrates self-direction and confidence
- h. Nurtures high expectations and encourages others to display their own skills and strengths
- i. Recognizes and respects individual strengths, differences, and viewpoints
- j. Links current research and best practices in education, family health, and/or disability services to own work by keeping abreast of new information and reflecting on its relevance

## 6.3 Displays professionalism in practice

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Recognizes that professionalism should be shown in all work settings, not just meetings
- b. Maintains a presentable, professional appearance relevant to the position and setting
- c. Expects and models the appropriate use of personal and professional technology (i.e., social media, texting)
- d. Chooses to work in settings that are aligned with one's own philosophy related to children and families
- e. Demonstrates practices that reflect personal philosophy
- f. Demonstrates an awareness that personal behaviors and actions within the work setting reflect on the setting
- g. Develops strategies to maintain one's physical, mental, and emotional health



## 6.4 Exhibits commitment to ongoing growth and learning

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Is curious and understands that learning is a lifelong process
- b. Develops and constantly refines a personal philosophy of learning
- c. Seeks out and participates in appropriate professional development opportunities and maintains an ongoing professional development record
- d. Reflects on current practice, investigates ways to improve, and maintains an individualized professional development plan
- e. Seeks out knowledge of the cultures and populations within the community and integrates into practice
- f. Knows that certain behaviors and types of communication among unfamiliar cultures can lead to misinterpretation and misunderstanding
- g. Explores and integrates current trends and research-based practices to make and justify decisions
- h. Joins professional organizations
- i. Encourages the use of reflective practices
- j. Engages and supports research opportunities (i.e., site-based, state wide survey)
- k. Participates in evaluation of program related to quality standards

## 6.5 Shows leadership skills

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Recognizes the importance of a philosophy, vision, mission, and goals
- b. Participates in the creation and regular review of a personal philosophy, vision, mission, and goals
- c. Recognizes the strengths and contributions of others in meeting the philosophy, vision, mission, and goals
- d. Is able to explain personal and program philosophy, vision, mission, and goals to a variety of audiences
- e. Serves as a mentor and resource for others in the field
- f. Builds networks and teams which provide a broad base of support and facilitate professional growth
- g. Follows program policies and/or code of ethical conduct in resolving conflicts
- h. Supports and promotes teamwork and trusting, respectful interactions
- i. Promotes collaborative, productive experiences and relationships by sharing planning, decision making, and problem-solving responsibilities

## 6.6 Advocates for children, families, and the early childhood profession

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Recognizes the field of early childhood as a profession
- b. Knows why quality early childhood experiences are important
- c. Recognizes how caring for and educating young children differs from the care and education of older children
- d. Contributes to the advocacy efforts of professional organizations
- e. Promotes acceptance of individuals with disabilities and special needs as valued and contributing family and community members
- f. Accepts and affirms children's similarities and individual differences by modeling words and actions which incorporate the use of people first language
- g. Acts as a resource and advocates for community awareness of the current research and best practices impacting children and families
- h. Understands that legislation and public policy at all levels impacts children, families, programs, and the early childhood profession
- i. Understands how public policies are developed and uses strategies to influence public policy
- j. Uses experiences and knowledge to inform and influence others about the needs of all children, families, and the profession

## 6.7 Collaborates among agencies

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Sees oneself as a part of a professional community
- b. Understands that children are best served through collaborations that impact children and families
- c. Communicates the value of collaborative relationships with others
- d. Develops and maintains relationships in the community that enhance the program
- e. Seeks out supports for children and families by accessing a variety of resources
- f. Participates on collaborative teams and uses information exchanged to improve practice
- g. Values and encourages the expression of many perspectives and participates in open, collaborative discussions to get ideas and solve problems
- h. Fosters effective relationships through a climate of trust and open communication within collaborative teams
- i. Serves responsibly as part of an interdisciplinary team, including participation in the IFSP/IEP process, according to appropriate policies and procedures and recommended practices
- j. Facilitates collaborative teams

## 7. Administration and Management



Critical to providing an optimal environment and services for young children's growth and development is effective and efficient program management and administration. Early childhood professionals serving in an administrative or leadership role must keep track of many areas of performance and accountability. Administrators must be proficient in and knowledgeable of accepted business practices, legal and regulatory requirements, financial management, marketing, record-keeping, and human resource management. Administrators should also have the ability to develop and implement program policies, communication strategies, and continuous quality improvement plans. Sharing a clear vision, philosophy, and mission for the program they administer is essential.

Strong and effective leaders listen well, make decisions, accept and delegate responsibility, build meaningful and respectful partnerships; plan, implement, maintain, and evaluate systems; advocate for children, families, and staff; and inspire others to do their best work.

## 7. Administration and Management

### Knowledge Base

**In order for children to thrive in early childhood programs, professionals who provide services to young children and their families must strive to know and understand:**

- Federal, state, and local law as they apply to business/program operations, and oversight
- Financial management practices and record maintenance
- The essential role data-informed decision-making plays in program planning and continuous quality improvement
- The principles of developmentally appropriate practice
- The importance of creating an inviting, inclusive, and engaging program environment for families that provides an opportunity for family leadership
- The development and adoption of vision and mission statements and their connection to programming, goal setting, and community messaging
- The role that reflective supervision plays in staff development

## 7. Administration and Management

### Core Competencies

#### The early childhood professional working with children:

- 7.1 Maintains procedures and systems that adhere to all applicable federal law, state, and local regulatory requirements and quality standards
- 7.2 Develops, implements, and revises management policies and procedures
- 7.3 Utilizes personnel and program policies and procedures, as well as effective systems for staff recruitment, development, management, and evaluation
- 7.4 Applies sound financial planning and management to the program's operation
- 7.5 Implements policies and procedures that support partnerships with families and respects their diverse needs and culture
- 7.6 Establishes and integrates program philosophy and continuous quality improvement throughout all aspects of the program

## 7.1 Maintains procedures and systems that adhere to all applicable federal law, state, and local regulatory requirements and quality standards

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Meets federal, state, and program documentation requirements by ensuring that the program maintains accurate, objective, timely, and well-organized child, family, financial, and program records
- b. Has written policies and procedures for reporting child abuse and neglect that comply with federal, state, and local laws
- c. Has written policies and procedures that protect the rights of children and staff involved in child abuse and neglect cases
- d. Establishes and implements policies and procedures to ensure confidentiality of child, family, and staff information



## 7.2 Develops, implements, and revises management policies and procedures

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Works collaboratively with governing boards, advisory groups, and committees
- b. Uses strategic planning to ensure the long-term success and effectiveness of the program
- c. Has written policies and procedures for how the program prepares for new families, orients and welcomes new families, and supports family involvement in all aspects of the program
- d. Ensures the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices and/or state approved curricula and authentic assessments that are aligned with current research and knowledge of best practices
- e. Establishes and implements a plan for child and family assessment that addresses the purposes, procedures, and uses of assessment results
- f. Maintains a system for individualized on-going child and/or family assessment and documentation related to planning programs, services, referrals, and facilitating transitions to other services and programs
- g. Organizes and staffs the program to minimize the number of transitions an individual child or family experiences during the day and/or program year
- h. Seeks opportunities to utilize technology to manage the program and/or services
- i. Implements effective marketing strategies to share information about the program and build relationships with prospective families and the community

### 7.3 Utilizes personnel and program policies and procedures, as well as effective systems for staff recruitment, development, management, and evaluation

#### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

- a. Has written policies and procedures to attract and retain a qualified, well-trained staff
- b. Designs, implements, analyzes, and revises organizational structure, job descriptions, evaluations, and personnel policies and procedures
- c. Provides an orientation for new staff members that covers the program's philosophy; expectations for ethical conduct; confidentiality; health, safety, and emergency procedures; regulatory and/or program requirements; and other applicable topics
- d. Communicates the program's policies regarding the purposes and appropriate uses for child and family assessment, ensures joint on-going curriculum planning, and establishes expectations of confidentiality
- e. Advances staff performance by observing practice, reviewing documentation, and meeting regularly to provide feedback and support to staff in on-going self-reflection
- f. Provides the supervisory support necessary for staff to maintain ethical standards and best practices
- g. Considers the skills and dispositions of individuals when organizing teams to best meet the needs of children and families
- h. Ensures that all staff members are adequately trained to work with children and families of diverse backgrounds, languages, and abilities
- i. Ensures children's progress across all developmental domains is assessed through ongoing observation and documentation
- j. Uses observation, reflection, and assessment tools to assess one's role of administrator
- k. Assists staff to advance program quality through supporting them in linking current research, resources, and program data to their practice by discussing program quality issues and ways to advance practice

## 7.4 Applies sound financial planning and management to the program's operation

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

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- a. Knows accepted business practices, legal and regulatory requirements, financial management, marketing, and record keeping (i.e., balance sheets, banking reconciliation)
- b. Demonstrates accountability of financial resources to governing boards, and the community, at least annually
- c. Understands fiscal responsibilities to funding sources (i.e., limitations/accountability from multiple funding streams)
- d. Implements fiscal policies and procedures that are consistent with the program's vision, mission, and goals
- e. Advocates for resources to improve program quality during the program's planning and budget development process
- f. Prepares an annual budget and maintains a system to review, adjust, and reconcile, at least on a quarterly basis
- g. Develops and maintains reports on the program budget ensuring that fiscal policy supports program goals and is in accordance with applicable federal, state, and agency requirements
- h. Exercises prudent stewardship of program resources by making decisions based on program financial reports and applicable federal, state, and program financial requirements
- i. Ensures a safe, welcoming, well-equipped program environment by contributing to the development of sound budgets, purchasing high-quality materials and equipment, and establishing and/or implementing systems to monitor/replace equipment and facilities
- j. Assists in expanding the program's funding base by staying informed of federal, state, local, and foundation funding opportunities
- k. Seeks, secures, and maintains collaborative partnerships that maximize resources

## 7.5 Implements policies and procedures that support partnerships with families and respects their diverse needs and culture

### BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

- a. Shares program philosophy, mission, and services with staff, families, and the community and encourages staff to do the same
- b. Establishes policies and practices that facilitate respectful and reciprocal relationships with families and recognizes each family's role as their child's lifelong teacher
- c. Establishes policies and practices that are respectful and accepting of diverse families and situations and ensures services are individualized to meet the needs and strengths of each participating family
- d. Ensures that the program communicates parents' rights in a format and language that is most comfortable for families
- e. Uses information from families to adapt the program structure or curriculum
- f. Maintains a physical environment that is accessible to all children and families
- g. Provides families with a variety of opportunities for participating in the program (i.e., volunteer opportunities, advisory groups, helping with repairs)
- h. Incorporates on-going opportunities for families to share strengths, skills, and talents
- i. Provides families with updates on children's progress on a regular basis
- j. Practices reflective supervision and supports staff in building relationships with families
- k. Supports staff in seeking knowledge of community resources in order to connect families with the most appropriate supports
- l. Creates partnerships with the larger community to develop resources that support children and families
- m. Works collaboratively with community agencies to meet the needs of individual children and families
- n. Advocates for needed services and resources for families
- o. Develops and maintains relationships with other professionals in related fields
- p. Ensures that families have access to information about their child and that the information is understandable and meaningful

- q. Establishes and implements policies and practices that engage families in meaningful decision-making opportunities for their child and the program
- r. Establishes and maintains procedures and supports for successful transitions of all enrolled children and families
- s. Protects the privacy and confidentiality of families, enabling colleagues to share only pertinent information to enhance services to families
- t. Demonstrates healthy and appropriate professional boundaries and works with staff to develop and model their own healthy boundaries
- u. Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and applies current theory and research on family systems and the effects of stress on families
- v. Supports staff in promoting positive parent-child interactions

## 7.6 Establishes and integrates program philosophy and continuous quality improvement throughout all aspects of the program

### **BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS**

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- a. Establishes and implements quality assurance processes
- b. Develops meaningful and realistic program goals and/or plans by analyzing results from the previous year's program improvement efforts and multiple information/data sources ( i.e., parent surveys, child outcomes, staff evaluations)
- c. Ensures that data collected about children, families, and program quality is meaningful
- d. Analyzes data and uses it to make program modifications, changes, and improvements, where applicable
- e. Understands continuous quality improvement is an on-going process linking program design, implementation, evaluation, and revision
- f. Connects all program operation elements (i.e., fiscal, personnel) to continuous quality improvement
- g. Supports the governing body, policy group, and/or advisory group in making informed decisions about program plans and policies by providing them with accurate and timely information
- h. Collaborates with committees, policy groups, governing bodies, and advisory groups by sharing data, problem-solving, acting on recommendations, and/or implementing policies and plans generated by them

# Professional Development Planning Tool

Use *West Virginia's Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* along with this planning tool to assess your skills and to identify areas of strength and areas of opportunity in your work with or on behalf of children and families. Then, develop goals for your work and plan your professional development. Administrators can also use this tool to conduct performance appraisals and to encourage staff members' commitment to ongoing professional growth and learning.

## Instructions:

Work through one competency area at a time. You may want to complete the planning tool over the course of a few days. You may also choose to focus on just one specific competency or competency area. *Note to Administrators: When using West Virginia's Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals to conduct a performance appraisal, request that the staff member conduct a self-assessment as well. Together, discuss the results of the staff member's self-assessment and your performance appraisal. Use the results to select goals and to plan for professional development.*

### 1) Assess

Carefully read through the related behaviors and skills for each competency. Use the planning tool to note whether that competency is an area of strength, an area to demonstrate progress, or an opportunity for growth. If you are not sure what is meant by a particular competency, indicate that it is an opportunity for growth. It is expected that even after many years as an early childhood professional, one would still have much more to learn. Take notes or keep track of your thoughts, as needed. You can use the Summary Page (on page 87) to keep track of your results as you complete each section.

### 2) Reflect

Use the Reflection Guide (on page 88) to consider your strengths and opportunities for growth.

### 3) Plan

Use the Planning Summary (on page 89) to select goals, plan for needed resources or professional development, and establish a timeframe for meeting the goals.

Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth
Consistently demonstrates <b>most</b> of the related behaviors and skills <b>independently</b>	Demonstrates <b>many</b> of the related behaviors and skills with <b>limited guidance</b>	<b>Rarely/never</b> demonstrates the related behavior and skills <b>without guidance</b>

## 1. Child Growth and Development

Core Competencies	Assessment			Notes
	Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth	
1.1 Understands typical and atypical development and multiple factors that influence development from conception through infancy and early childhood				
1.2 Applies the process of assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation to support children's growth through developmentally appropriate practices				
1.3 Encourages children's development of social and emotional skills				
1.4 Helps children achieve self-regulation and develop coping skills				
1.5 Encourages the development of self-help skills to promote independence				
1.6 Supports children's gross and fine motor development				
1.7 Supports children's cognitive development				
1.8 Promotes emergent literacy including speaking, listening, reading, and writing through play and interaction with children				
1.9 Encourages and supports Dual Language Learners				
1.10 Facilitates children's play to encourage development across domains				
<b>Demonstrates Strength</b>	<b>Demonstrates Progress</b>		<b>Opportunity for Growth</b>	
Consistently demonstrates <b>most</b> of the related behaviors and skills <b>independently</b>	Demonstrates <b>many</b> of the related behaviors and skills with <b>limited guidance</b>		<b>Rarely/never</b> demonstrates the related behavior and skills <b>without guidance</b>	



## 2. Family and Community Relationships

Core Competencies	Assessment			Notes
	Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth	
2.1 Respects families and is responsive to language, culture, family characteristics, needs, concerns, and priorities				
2.2 Communicates regularly, respectfully, and effectively with families				
2.3 Provides families with opportunities to learn and develop skills to help children achieve desired outcomes within the program, at home, and in the community				
2.4 Helps connect families with needed resources and services				
2.5 Supports families through transitions within and between programs and environments				

Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth
Consistently demonstrates <b>most</b> of the related behaviors and skills <b>independently</b>	Demonstrates <b>many</b> of the related behaviors and skills with <b>limited guidance</b>	<b>Rarely/never</b> demonstrates the related behavior and skills <b>without guidance</b>

### 3. Child Observation and Assessment

Core Competencies	Assessment			Notes
	Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth	
3.1 Uses observation and assessment to support children's development and learning				
3.2 Practices appropriate child assessment				
3.3 Builds positive, productive partnerships with families and colleagues to enhance the assessment process				
3.4 Uses data to share children's developmental progress with families and other pertinent team members				
3.5 Uses observations and assessments to inform instruction and guide planning				
3.6 Engages in additional practices to support formal evaluation and reporting procedures when determining support services (applicable to Assessment Teams)				

Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth
Consistently demonstrates <b>most</b> of the related behaviors and skills <b>independently</b>	Demonstrates <b>many</b> of the related behaviors and skills with <b>limited guidance</b>	<b>Rarely/never</b> demonstrates the related behavior and skills <b>without guidance</b>

#### 4. Environment and Curriculum

Core Competencies	Assessment			Notes
	Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth	
4.1 Develops and models genuine, supportive relationships				
4.2 Creates an environment that is predictable, promotes interaction and learning, and is responsive to the needs of all children				
4.3 Works to effectively promote social and emotional development and prevent challenging behaviors				
4.4 Establishes a learning environment within group settings that is well-organized and visually pleasing, and promotes reflection, extends learning, and encourages self-management and cooperation				
4.5 Selects and implements developmentally appropriate, evidence-based curriculum				
4.6 Designs and implements activities and strategies to help meet the individual needs of all children in an integrated curriculum				

Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth
Consistently demonstrates <b>most</b> of the related behaviors and skills <b>independently</b>	Demonstrates <b>many</b> of the related behaviors and skills with <b>limited guidance</b>	<b>Rarely/never</b> demonstrates the related behavior and skills <b>without guidance</b>

## 5. Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Core Competencies	Assessment			Notes
	Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth	
5.1 Identifies practices that encourage positive health behaviors and support the physical and mental well-being of children and families				
5.2 Understands the appropriate precautions and applicable procedures to ensure a safe learning environment				
5.3 Understands the appropriate procedures for emergencies and injuries				
5.4 Understands the impact of child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, and domestic violence on children and families				
5.5 Understands the importance of good nutrition and food safety to support healthy growth in children and families				
5.6 Understands the importance of healthy lifestyles to support healthy growth in children and families				
5.7 Understands the necessity of maintaining records related to the health, safety, and nutrition of children and families				

Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth
Consistently demonstrates <b>most</b> of the related behaviors and skills <b>independently</b>	Demonstrates <b>many</b> of the related behaviors and skills with <b>limited guidance</b>	<b>Rarely/never</b> demonstrates the related behavior and skills <b>without guidance</b>

## 6. Professionalism and Leadership

Core Competencies	Assessment			Notes
	Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth	
6.1 Upholds all relevant ethical standards and professional guidelines				
6.2 Demonstrates dispositions necessary to effectively support young children and families				
6.3 Displays professionalism in practice				
6.4 Exhibits commitment to ongoing growth and learning				
6.5 Shows leadership skills				
6.6 Advocates for children, families, and the early childhood profession				
6.7 Collaborates among agencies				

Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth
Consistently demonstrates <b>most</b> of the related behaviors and skills <b>independently</b>	Demonstrates <b>many</b> of the related behaviors and skills with <b>limited guidance</b>	<b>Rarely/never</b> demonstrates the related behavior and skills <b>without guidance</b>

## 7. Administration and Management

Core Competencies	Assessment			Notes
	Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth	
7.1 Maintains procedures and systems that adhere to all applicable federal law, state, and local regulatory requirements and quality standards				
7.2 Develops, implements, and revises management policies and procedures				
7.3 Utilizes personnel and program policies and procedures, as well as effective systems for staff recruitment, development, management, and evaluation				
7.4 Applies sound financial planning and management to the program's operation				
7.5 Implements policies and procedures that support partnerships with families and respects their diverse needs and culture				
7.6 Establishes and integrates program philosophy and continuous quality improvement throughout all aspects of the program				

Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth
Consistently demonstrates <b>most</b> of the related behaviors and skills <b>independently</b>	Demonstrates <b>many</b> of the related behaviors and skills with <b>limited guidance</b>	<b>Rarely/never</b> demonstrates the related behavior and skills <b>without guidance</b>

## Summary Page

Record your assessment results below.

Core Competencies	Demonstrates Strength	Demonstrates Progress	Opportunity for Growth
1. Child Growth and Development			
2. Family and Community Relationships			
3. Child Observation and Assessment			
4. Environment and Curriculum			
5. Health, Safety, and Nutrition			
6. Professionalism and Leadership			
7. Administration and Management			

## Reflection Guide

Review the Summary Page and consider your assessment results. Complete the following guide using the results from the assessment.

### Step 1

List two competencies in which you are demonstrating strength in order of importance to you.

*Example 2.4 Helps connect families with needed resources and services*

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 2

List two competencies in which you are demonstrating progress in order of importance to you.

*Example 5.3 Understands the appropriate procedures for emergencies and injuries*

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 3

List two competencies that you indicated as an opportunity for growth in order of importance to you.

*Example 3.5 Uses observations and assessments to inform instruction and guide planning*

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 4

Select the first priority of Step 1, Step 2, or Step 3.

Priority Competency

Indicate why this priority is important to you and your work with children and families.

*Ex. Priority Competency 3.5 Using observations and assessments for each child will help me plan activities that promote each child's development*

\_\_\_\_\_

### Step 5

Develop two goals related to this priority based on the behaviors and skills listed.

*Ex. Goal #1 3.5.b. Responds to the level of support an individual child needs to progress developmentally and Goal #2 3.5.d. Uses assessment practices to show developmental progress during daily routines and play*

Goal #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Goal #2 \_\_\_\_\_



## Planning Summary

Complete the following tool using the results from the Reflection Guide.

Priority Competency from Step 4 \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Key Considerations</b>	Goal #1 from Step 5	Goal #2 from Step 5
<b>Resources</b> Do I need any materials or physical resources to help me meet this goal? If so, what are they?		
<b>Professional Development Content</b> Do I need any professional development to help me meet this goal? If so, in what content or topic area?		
<b>Professional Development Format</b> What format/s of professional development would be most effective in helping me meet this goal (i.e., workshop, college course, research, shadowing, coaching, etc.)		
<b>Finding Professional Development</b> How do I find the professional development that I need?		
<b>Additional Support</b> What type of support might I need in order to help me implement my new skills or apply my new knowledge?		
<b>Performance Indicators</b> How will I know if I am making progress? How will my practice change?		

# History

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The state of West Virginia originally developed the Core Knowledge and Core Competencies document for the WV STARS Professional Development System for Early Care and Education to support the growing early care and education profession. This document was initially built on the work of the Professional Development Committee, a committee of the Governor's Early Childhood Implementation Commission.

On November 12, 2004, the Partners Implementing an Early Care and Education System (PIECES) Advisory Council adopted a set of revised core knowledge and core competencies upon the recommendation of the PIECES Professional Development Committee. A sub-group of the Professional Development Committee provided dedicated time, expertise, and resources to revise the core competencies to support the growing professional development system.

Several years later, an additional revised document was published to include the *In-Home Family Education Core Knowledge and Core Competencies* that were adapted from the *Early Care and Education Core Knowledge and Core Competencies* by the Partners in Community Outreach. The Training Committee of Partners in Community Outreach included representatives from Healthy Families America, Parents as Teachers, Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker, and WV Department of Health and Human Resources/Bureau for Children and Families/Early Care and Education. The West Virginia STARS Policy Council approved the *In-Home Family Education Core Knowledge and Core Competencies* on Sept. 17, 2008.

Members of the West Virginia Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) Professional Development Committee recognized and responded to the evolving early care and education profession by engaging in another revision process of the Core Knowledge and Core Competencies beginning October 2012. Over the next several years, the ECAC subcommittee spearheaded the efforts to bring together early care and education leaders around the state of West Virginia to research, write, and edit *West Virginia's Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals*. The document was adopted by the Early Childhood Advisory Council on June 1, 2015.

*The Core Body of Knowledge: New York State's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, Ohio Early Learning Core Knowledge and Core Competencies*, and the original *West Virginia Core Knowledge and Core Competencies* documents were used as primary resources for adapting core competencies and content. Other documents used as references can be found in the bibliography.

# Glossary

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**Accommodations** - Changes made to instruction, assessment, or environment intended to help children fully participate

**Adult activities** - The actions taken by adults to encourage children's interests and actions to enhance learning

**Artistic representation** - A likeness or image produced by a child through a variety of media (i.e., drawing, painting, singing, dancing, dramatics)

**Assessment team** - A pre-determined group of individuals working together to ensure developmentally appropriate assessment processes are utilized to guide the development of an individual child

**Assistive technology** - An item, piece of equipment, or product that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of young children with developmental disabilities

**Attitude of inquiry** - An openness to learning, discovering, and exploring previously unknown contributing factors, theories, beliefs, concepts, research, standards, knowledge, and skills

**Authentic assessment** - A form of assessment in which a child's abilities are measured by performing real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills

**Child-directed activities** - Experiences that are guided by the child's interests and actions

**Child-related displays** - A display of materials designed to extend the children's learning experiences and to nurture their pride in achievement

**Communicable diseases/Infectious diseases** - A disease caused by a microorganism (bacterium, virus, fungus, or parasite) that can be transmitted from person to person via infected body fluids or respiratory spray, with or without an intermediary agent (such as a louse, mosquito)

or environmental object (such as a table surface). Many infectious diseases are reportable to the local health authority.

**Communication strategies** - A plan of action to communicate efficiently and effectively

**Comprehension** - The capacity of the mind to perceive and understand; power to grasp ideas; ability to know

**Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)** - A system that seeks to improve the provision of services with an emphasis on future results

**Creative expression** - Children have open-ended experiences that provide them with tools, strategies, and concepts to represent their thoughts, feelings, and experiences freely

**Critical thinking** - The mental process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reach an answer or conclusion

**Curriculum** - An intentional plan that includes the entire range of experiences provided in an educational setting, including content, goals, philosophical underpinnings, teaching strategies, and assessment practices

**Developmental domains** - Child development can be organized in broad categories of inter-related learning called domains

**Developmentally appropriate practices** - A framework of principles and guidelines for best practice in the care and education of young children, birth through age eight

**Dual Language Learner** - Children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language

**Early childhood professionals** - Those working in the

field of early childhood who provide direct services to young children (from prenatal through age eight) and their families, as well as those who administer the programs in which these individuals work, and those who provide professional development for these individuals

**Emergent literacy** - The view that literacy learning begins at birth and is encouraged through participation with adults in meaningful reading and writing activities

**Families** - A group of people affiliated by birth, marriage, or co-residence who are responsible for the long-term care and well-being of the child

**Family assessment** - A systematic process of identifying, considering, and weighing factors about the family's strengths, priorities, and concerns. Family assessment is guided by principles of family-centered, culturally competent practice.

**Fine motor** - Coordination of small muscle movements which are necessary to engage in smaller, more precise movements, including hand-eye coordination

**Formal evaluation** - The diagnostic study of assessment data

**Formative assessment** (authentic assessment) - Involves collecting evidence about how children's learning is progressing during the course of development so that necessary instructional and environmental adjustments can be made to close the gap between children's current understanding and the desired goals. Formative assessment practices should include the following:

- All children should be assessed using age-appropriate methods on all domains of early learning and development;
- All children should be assessed in their native language and in their progress toward English proficiency;
- The assessment process should be used to inform and improve environmental opportunities for learning;
- The assessment process should be based on a model that gauges how much progress an individual child is making;
- Early childhood professionals must have appropriate professional development and supports to embed assess-

ment practices into the environment and curriculum; and

- Assessment data should be shared with families to inform them of the child's ongoing development.

**Gross motor** - Large movements involving the arms, legs, feet, or entire body such as crawling, running, and jumping

**Imitation** - A component of learning where a child develops skills by repeating the actions and/or words of others

**Individual language development** - Understanding and respecting that each person develops language skills at an individual rate

**Individualized Education Program (IEP)** - A written statement for an eligible student with an exceptionality that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with WV Board of Education State Board Policy 2419: Regulations for the Education of Students with Exceptionalities and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

**Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP)** - The plan is required by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for all children eligible for the WV Birth to Three system. The plan is individualized for each family based on their priorities and the needs of their child, and is a written document that identifies the supports necessary to enhance the family's capacity to facilitate the development of their infant or toddler.

**Intervention** - The planning and execution of actions by professionals and caregivers designed to assist children in the acquisition and use of skills

**Joint attention** - When one individual alerts another to an object by means of eye-gazing, pointing, or other verbal or non-verbal communication

**Mandated reporters** - Individuals required by state laws to report concerns of child abuse and neglect

**Medical home** - A team-based health care delivery model in which the child's health care professional acts as the

lead and works in partnership with the family, child, and other professionals to ensure that all the medical and non-medical needs of the child are met

**Mission** - Pre-established purpose

**Modifications** - Changes to what is being taught to or expected from a child

**Natural consequences** - Outcomes that occur as a direct result of behavior; they are imposed by the environment, society, or a person who is not in the position of authority

**Open-ended questions** - Questions that cannot be answered by “yes” or “no.” Often begin with who, what, why, where and when. Designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer using the child’s own knowledge and/or feelings.

**People first language** - Putting the person before the disability

**Philosophy** - The most basic beliefs, concepts, and attitudes of an individual or group

**Phonological awareness** - The understanding that spoken language is made up of individual and separate sounds (phonemes). In addition to sounds, phonological awareness activities can involve work with rhymes, words, sentences, and syllables.

**Prior knowledge** - The accumulated experiences and mental constructs that support a child’s understanding of new material

**Prudent stewardship** - The careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care

**Reflective practices** - A continuous process that involves attention to all relationships, including the relationship between the child and the parent, the parent and the practitioner, and the practitioner with the supervisor. Reflective practice involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice. At the same time it involves being supported in supervision by

attending to the emotional content of the work and how reactions to this content may impact outcomes. The act of reflection is seen as a way of promoting the development of autonomous, qualified, and self-directed professionals. Engaging in reflective practice is associated with the improvement of the quality of care, stimulating personal and professional growth, and closing the gap between theory and practice.

**Reflective supervision** - The practice of meeting routinely with staff members to discuss experiences, thoughts, and feelings about their work. It is reflective, collaborative, regular, relationship-based, focused on professional growth, strength-based, safe, individualized, and characterized by active listening.

**Self-regulation** - A child’s ability to gain control of bodily functions, manage powerful emotions, and maintain focus and attention

**Sensory integration** - Sensory processing (sometimes called "sensory integration" or SI) is a term that refers to the way the nervous system receives messages from the senses and turns them into appropriate motor and behavioral responses

**Stakeholders** - An individual or group of individuals who have an investment, share, or interest in the early childhood community

**Temperament** - Children are born with their natural style of interacting with or reacting to people, places, and things

**Universal/standard precautions** - Use of barriers such as gloves to handle potential exposure to blood, including blood-containing body fluids and tissue discharges, and to handle other potentially infectious fluids and the process to clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces

**Variance** - A change in something or a difference between things

**Vision** - An overarching goal

**Vocabulary** - The words that make up a language

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