

Professional Development Overview: Support for Practitioners



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



National Center on Child Care Professional
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Professional development (PD) systems are made up of connected services and supports with a common goal to build an effective workforce. To raise quality and retain effective educators, PD systems can combine promising PD and workforce strategies at the practitioner, program, and system levels.

This overview focuses on the **practitioner level**. It provides a brief [definition of PD](#), its [purpose](#), [how it is delivered](#), and a summary of what [sequential and portable PD](#) is and why it is important. It also includes a few [specific examples of sequential and portable PD](#) and [entry-level PD](#).

PD DEFINITION

Professional development (PD) is training, formal education, and technical assistance supports that help you learn and apply new knowledge and skills. PD can also include the practical experiences you gain through observations, student teaching, and on-the-job training.

PD includes:

- Professional preparation—what you must know and be able to do prior to employment; and
- Ongoing development—what you must know and be able to do to stay in your role.

PD PURPOSE

The purpose of early childhood and school-age PD is to prepare and continuously support you to work with and on behalf of young children and their families. PD provides opportunities to improve your knowledge, skills, practice, and dispositions.

Your PD goal may be to complete a credential, certification, degree, or to move up a level on a career pathway (lattice). Or, it may be to complete a designated training series, course of study, or orientation.

Why Take PD?

- Improve effectiveness
- Meet position requirements
- Qualify for career advancement

HOW PD IS DELIVERED

PD is delivered in three primary modes:

1. Face-to-face;
2. Technology supported (commonly called distance learning); and
3. Blended learning or hybrid (a combination of face-to-face and distance learning).

The number of hours or the number of meeting times depends of the purpose of the PD. There are many PD formats, including:

- Single session trainings (designed to build awareness);
- Training series or modules (designed for in-depth content delivery, reflection and application);
- College courses (designed to provide credit towards a degree, usually at least 45 clock hours of attendance); and
- Technical assistance, such as coaching or mentoring (designed to improve your specific work with children and families or increase the quality of the program).

States/Territories and Tribes may require early childhood and school-age professionals who work in regulated programs to take a certain amount of training hours and/or higher education credits. PD can be offered for:

- Clock hours (the number of hours you participate in training);
- Continuing Education Units (a standard measurement of hours of continuing education and training activities, or non-credit training—1 CEU is equal to 10 clock hours of learning);
- Staff Development Units (SDUs—1 SDU is equal to 10 clock hours of learning); and
- Credit hours (a standard measurement of academic credit).

Many individuals, organizations, and agencies offer PD opportunities, including:

- Individual adult educators/trainers and technical assistance specialists (e.g., consultants, coaches, and mentors);
- Community-based training and technical assistance organizations;
- Child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs);
- State, Territory, and/or Tribal PD systems;
- Institutions of higher education (IHE), including Tribal colleges;
- Tribal, State, Territory, and national professional organizations;
- Head Start/Early Head Start;
- Public schools; and
- Health departments.

SEQUENTIAL AND PORTABLE PD

Ideally, PD is carefully planned and intentionally leads to an increase in qualifications and opportunities for career advancement. It can be difficult to decide which training or course to take. You need to know what PD is available, what you want and need to take, and for what purpose. You also want to know that the PD will result in improved practice, increased qualifications, and potentially higher compensation.

PD systems can support you by providing career advisors. Career advisors can help you explore options and determine a path that works best for you. Career advisors can also help you find scholarships and other supports that make it possible to participate in and complete a PD opportunity.

PD systems and policies can also support you by offering or aligning quality PD opportunities that are sequential and build on each other. When PD opportunities are based on common professional standards, including core knowledge and competencies, they have a shared framework.

A shared framework facilitates the development of PD that can be:

- Stackable from one level to the next;
- Commonly accepted across settings (centers, homes, schools);
- Commonly accepted across sectors (Child Care, Head Start/Early Head Start, public preschool/primary education, and early intervention/special education);
- Commonly accepted across related systems (family support, health, and mental health) within a State/Territory or Tribe; and
- Portable across States/Territories and Tribes.

General Examples of Sequential and Portable PD

- A training series or module leads to a credential.
- A credential counts for credit at an institution of higher education or meets a requirement for a degree.
- A certificate from a community college counts toward an associate's degree.
- General education credits at a Tribal college count toward a degree at a State university.
- An associate's degree articulates into a bachelor's degree without any loss of credits.

SPECIFIC SEQUENTIAL AND PORTABLE PD EXAMPLES

- The Expanding Quality Infant Toddler Initiative (EQIT) offers training for Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and/or college credit that lead to a formal credential. The EQIT training meets **Colorado** regulatory compliance requirements for infant/toddler teachers to work in infant/toddler classrooms in licensed programs. This community-based training, if taken for college credit, also articulates into an early childhood (EC) associate's degree within any Colorado community college.
http://www.cde.state.co.us/early/EQInfant_Toddler.htm
- The **Illinois** PD system offers required basic-level training and credentials through some institutes of higher education. All levels of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential are designed for practitioners working with children birth to age 8 across all settings and sectors including Child Care, Head Start/Early Head Start, and early intervention. Students completing aligned coursework are eligible in 2 years to apply for any of the three credentials that are recognized by the State. <http://www.ilgateways.com/en/career-lattice>
- In **Maine**, an ECE certificate program prepares individuals for entry-level positions at institutions and agencies serving young children and educates inservice personnel who want to upgrade their skills. Transfer agreements exist with Maine's universities and other colleges that grant bachelor degrees. This certificate qualifies professionals for the following levels on the State career lattice: levels 3–5 for practitioners in center-based, family child care, Head Start/Early Head Start and school-age settings; and levels 2–3 with additional experience for program administrators and managers.
<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/maineroads/>
- The **Office of Head Start** and the **University of Cincinnati** developed Infant and Toddler Curriculum Modules to be incorporated into an existing college course, or grouped together to comprise an entire college curriculum. The curriculum consists of courses in simple module form that incorporate the latest research and expertise in online learning. The courses may be used to develop an IT associate degree focused completely on IT care and development. The Infant and Toddler Curriculum Modules can be accessed by institutions of higher learning across the country. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ta-system/ehsnrc/Early%20Head%20Start/itech>

SPECIFIC ENTRY-LEVEL PD EXAMPLES

- **Face-to-Face:** The **Colorado** Pyramid Plus Center provides a face-to-face training based on the framework and content of the Pyramid Model Modules (Infant & Toddler and Preschool) and embeds evidence-based inclusion practices. Thirty clock hours of training, or 3 CEUs, are awarded and recognized by State child care licensing. The training may also be taken as a college course at community colleges. <http://www.pyramidplus.org/>
- **Distance Learning:** The **North Dakota** *Easy Reach* trainings include over 60 pre-service trainings to cover child care basics and topics related to North Dakota core knowledge and competencies. Trainings are between 1–2 hours, are self-study, and are available online. The trainings get added to a registered user’s training transcript and/or Growing Futures Professional Development Plan, and users can download a certificate of completion. <http://www.ndchildcare.org/training/online/easy-reach.html>
- **Onsite TA:** **Virginia** EC and school-age professionals can participate in quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) mentoring services, in partnership with local Departments of Social Services. Mentors rate providers’ classroom environments, based on the Environment Rating Scales and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Mentors and program participants then meet regularly and collaborate to determine and implement strategies for improving program quality. Participants typically receive 8–10 hours of mentoring a month. http://www.smartbeginnings.org/Portals/5/PDFs/VSQI/Mentor_Toolkit.pdf