



Aligning Distance Learning Criteria

This brief is one of a series that accompany the Distance Learning Planning and Implementation Guide. These resources are designed to help State/Territory decisionmakers increase the capacity of their professional development (PD) systems by providing additional access to distance learning. For more information visit <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/distance-learning-planning-and-implementation-guide-0>.

This brief summarizes and provides examples of how distance learning (DL) criteria can align with licensing requirements and professional standards.

INTRODUCTION

PD systems can incorporate criteria to develop, approve, and track distance DL offerings. DL criteria can align with the guiding principles of a PD system and its trainer/training approval system and institutions of higher education (IHE) accreditation standards to promote articulation from training-based DL to DL for college/university credit. When this alignment exists, DL can be an effective method for students to build skills and move along a career pathway and for PD systems to address needs of a diverse workforce.

ALIGNMENT WITH LICENSING

Child Care licensing regulations describe training requirements and, in some cases, the type of training or training delivery that counts toward meeting the requirements. Most licensing regulations mention training or courses provided by colleges, universities, or other approved training organizations. More frequently, licensing regulations are including DL activities within the list of approved or accepted training. For example, Illinois child care providers can count Internet home study programs toward meeting licensing regulations if the Internet site provides documentation of use and number of clock hours. In addition, Illinois' mandated reporter training is accessible through the Department of Child and Family Service's Web site at: www.dcfstraining.org/manrep/index.jsp.

ALIGNMENT WITH STANDARDS

PD systems or IHE approve course content for both face-to-face and DL courses when the content links or aligns with a defined set of core knowledge and competencies, national standards, credentials, or career lattice levels. This course content may include multiple core knowledge areas or standards, or be designed to address the needs of a specific PD level or role.

ALIGNMENT EXAMPLE

The [Early Childhood Learning Community \(ECLC\)](#) at the University of Cincinnati offers accredited online degrees designed specifically for working professionals.

Accreditation

Online programs are included under the University of Cincinnati's accreditations by:

- The Higher Learning Commission's North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)/National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- Ohio Department of Education

Credit and Pathways

Students can earn nine credit hours toward the ECLC associate of applied science (AAS) degree program by completing the online Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential™ program. The online ECLC associate degree was developed for professionals working in child care, Head Start/Early Head Start, and preschool programs and includes coursework in child development, developmentally appropriate practices for young children, and child guidance strategies. The coursework design promotes ongoing theory-to-practice opportunities for students to apply concepts they are learning in their online classes to their everyday EC and/or SA workplace settings.

ECLC's online bachelor's degree caters to working professionals who want to gain additional knowledge and skills for serving children from birth to age 5. The degree does not carry teacher licensure for a K–12 setting; however, it does include online coursework in English, math, the humanities, and the social sciences required to complete a bachelor's degree.

Content Designed to Address a Specific Role—Infant/Toddler Professionals

The Office of Head Start, in collaboration with the University of Cincinnati and its partners, funded an Innovation and Improvement Grant to develop course modules that incorporate the latest research and expertise in online learning. States/Territories, in partnership with their IHE, can use these courses to develop an associate degree program focused completely on infant and toddler care and development. The curriculum:

- Provides online associate-level course content (in both English and Spanish) packaged into 15 courses, comprising modules containing videos of effective practice, reflection exercises, and relevant readings
- Can be incorporated into an existing college course, or grouped together to comprise an entire college curriculum
- Contains an instructor's guide describing effective practices and links course content to Head Start Program Performance Standards and NAEYC Standards

More information on the infant and toddler online associate degree courses is available at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ta-system/ehsnrc/Early%20Head%20Start/itech>.