



Building and Strengthening Skills and Competencies

The development of core knowledge and competency standards (CKCs) is a key part of professionalizing infant/toddler care and education. Several states and territories have identified research-based competencies for educators (this includes all who care for infants and toddlers) that describe skills, knowledge, and dispositions (or ways of being) that are needed to provide high-quality care to young children.

One example is [New Hampshire's Infant and Toddler Workforce Specialized Competencies](#). These specialized skills and knowledge are described across four advancing levels that support the best professional development for those working with infants, toddlers, and their families. The competency of *engagement* is described as an infant and toddler professional who

- ◆ understands that eye contact and “conversation” (repeating sounds back to infants and modeling words for toddlers) promotes healthy brain development;
- ◆ recognizes when infants and toddlers are ready to expand their explorations and is aware of the need to provide security while encouraging growth;
- ◆ discusses the system of primary caregiving and knows how to implement the system in infant and toddler programs; and
- ◆ knows that professionals who feel valued and fulfilled in their work provide opportunities for optimal growth and development of children and support for families (Child Development Bureau, 2015, p. 6).

New Hampshire's *Infant and Toddler Workforce Specialized Competencies* include a [self-assessment tool](#), on page 25 of the document, for infant and toddler professionals to assess their skills and develop action steps for professional development.

In early childhood education, competencies often address *disposition*, which has to do with a teacher's approach, temperament, and outlook. As you reflect on your work, what do you think it is about your viewpoint and temperament that helps you give quality care to infants and toddlers?

The [California Early Childhood Educator \(ECE\) Competencies](#) describe the following dispositions for early childhood educators

- ◆ Shows support for the individual development and learning of all children
- ◆ Recognizes and facilitates the primary role of families in children's development and learning
- ◆ Values play as essential to a young child's development and learning (California Department of Education & First 5 California, 2011, p. 14)

The [California Early Childhood Educator Competencies webpage](#) includes more information about the competencies, links to related videos, and a self-assessment for early educators. The companion to the *California ECE Competencies*, [CompSAT](#), is also available to the public for free. CompSAT is a competencies-based self-assessment toolkit with online professional development tools for early childhood educators. It includes ways to explore your competencies and tools for reflection and inquiry.

While most states and territories have CKCs for early childhood educators, not all do. State and territory CKCs vary as to whether they include competencies specific to infant and toddler educators, and only a few states have



separate CKCs for infant and toddler educators. You can find out what is used in your state or territory by searching online for “core knowledge and competencies” and the name of your state or territory. You can also find information about how CKCs are included in your state or territory’s professional development system by asking managers in your program, professional development specialist or coaches, or higher education professionals.

Resources

[Head Start and Early Head Start Relationship-Based Competencies for Staff and Supervisors Who Work with Families](#) (n.d.) describes competencies and related knowledge, skills, and actions for staff and supervisors who work with families of children ages birth through 5 years. It was written by the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[Workforce Knowledge, Competencies, and Educational Practices](#) (n.d.) provides an overview of critical knowledge, competencies, and practices for all early childhood professionals. It also includes a list of general practices for professionals working with infants and toddlers. It was developed by the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

References

California Department of Education, & First 5 California. (2011). *California early childhood educator competencies*. Retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/ececompetencies2011.pdf>

Child Development Bureau, Division for Children, Youth and Families, New Hampshire Department for Health and Human Services. (2015). New Hampshire’s infant and toddler workforce specialized competencies. Retrieved from <http://nh.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2-9-15-Infant-Toddler-Workforce-Competencies.pdf>

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