Key Competencies for Licensors of Child Care Programs

Early Childhood National Centers

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Quality Assurance

Acknowledgements

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Contents

Introduction

Key Competencies for Licensors of Child Care Programs is a technical assistance resource document that outlines the knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that a licensor of child care programs needs in order to perform his or her job duties successfully. Licensors may also be called consultants, inspectors, licensing specialists, and case managers but generally have similar responsibilities. Child care programs include any type of licensed child care facility, such as child care centers, group child care homes, family child care homes, and school-age care programs.

As a result of changes implemented by the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014, which reauthorized the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program, States are now required to have polices in place to ensure that licensing inspectors are qualified and have received training in related health and safety requirements; and that the ratio of inspectors to providers is sufficient to ensure that visits occur in a timely manner.[1] This change in law—combined with the expansion of programs offering nontraditional-hour care and multilingual services to meet the diverse needs of families—means that child care licensing agencies need staff with skills, knowledge, and behaviors that enable them to work effectively with the full range of child care programs and services.

Potential uses for this document are as follows:

♦ Assessing and updating job descriptions to reflect the desired competencies for the position

♦ Recruiting, valuing, and retaining licensors who reflect the diversity of providers and families

♦ Developing competency-based interview questions to help determine whether candidates possess the desired competencies

♦ Evaluating existing or creating new staff orientation programs, ongoing training, and individualized professional development plans to enhance the desired competencies

♦ Promoting self-assessment and self-reflection of knowledge and skills

♦ Supporting continuous quality improvement and leadership development

♦ Incorporating competencies into the performance evaluation process

This document may be useful to the following audiences:

♦ Supervisors of licensing staff

♦ Managers and directors of licensing programs

♦ Human resources professionals and directors

♦ Training and professional development directors

♦ Institutions of higher education

♦ Child care licensors

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[1] 42 U.S.C. § 9858c(c)(2)(K) (2015).

National Guidelines from *Caring for Our Children*

Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd edition (CFOC3), is a collection of national standards that represent the best evidence, expertise, and experience in the country on quality health and safety practices and policies that should be followed in today's early care and education settings (American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, & National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education, 2011). CFOC3 provides the following guidelines and rationale for training licensors:

10.3.5 Licensing Staff Training

Standard 10.3.5.1: Education, Experience and Training of Licensing Inspectors

Licensing inspectors, and others in licensing positions, should be pre-qualified by education and experience to be knowledgeable about the form of child care they are assigned to inspect. Prior to employment or within the first six months of employment, licensing inspectors should receive training in regulatory administration based on the concepts and principles found in the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) Licensing Curriculum through onsite platform training or online coursework[2]. In addition, they should receive no less than forty clock hours of orientation training upon employment[3]. In addition, they should receive no less than twenty-four clock hours of continuing education each year[4], covering the following topics and other such topics as necessary based on competency needs:

a. The licensing statutes and rules for child care;

b. Other applicable state and federal statutes and regulations;

c. The historical, conceptual, and theoretical basis for licensing, investigation, and enforcement;

d. Technical skills related to the person's duties and responsibilities, such as investigative techniques, interviewing, rule-writing, due process, and data management;

e. Child development, early childhood education principles, child care programming, scheduling, and design of space;

f. Law enforcement and the rights of licensees;

g. Center and large or small family child care home management;

h. Child and staff health in child care;

i. Detection, prevention, and management of child abuse;

j. Practical techniques and ADA requirements for inclusion of children with special needs;

k. Exclusion/inclusion of children who are ill;

l. Health, safety, physical activity, and nutrition;

m. Recognition of hazards.

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[2] National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA). 2000. Phases of licensing. In *NARA licensing curriculum.* 2000 ed. Lexington, KY: NARA.
[3] NARA [see note 2]
[4] NARA [see note 2]

Rationale

Licensing inspectors are a point of contact and linkage for caregivers/teachers and sources of technical information needed to improve the quality of child care. This is particularly true for areas not usually within the network of early childhood professionals, such as health and safety expertise. Unless the licensing inspector is competent and able to recognize areas where facilities need to improve their health and safety provisions (for example prevention of infectious disease), the opportunity for such linkages will be lost. To effectively carry out their responsibilities to license and monitor child care facilities, it is critical that licensing inspectors have appropriate, conceptually based professional development in the principles, concepts and practices of child care licensing as well as in the principles and practices of the form of child care to which they are assigned.

What Is a Competency?

A competency is a "measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully. Competencies specify the 'how' of performing job tasks, or what the person needs to do the job successfully" (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, n.d.).

It is widely accepted that a competency is based on a combination of three factors:

♦ *Knowledge*, which refers to particular concepts someone needs to know to do a job.

♦ *Skills and abilities*, which refer to the natural or learned technical or practical expertise required to perform a job.

♦ *Behaviors and other characteristics*, which refer to the way in which one conducts oneself and the traits that are needed to be effective in a job.

Figure 1: Three Factors of Competencies
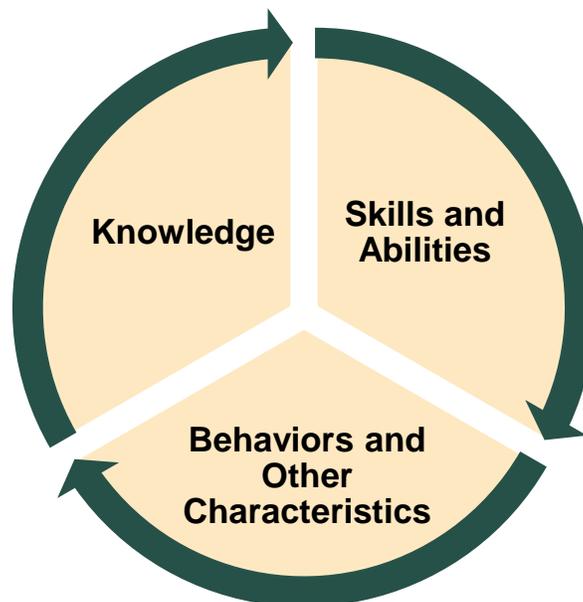
A competency provides a common point of reference or benchmark associated with successful performance; an individual who demonstrates competence is performing successfully at an expected level. Competencies are described by key actions or behaviors. Consider the following examples:

♦ Decisionmaking

  ▪ Uses sound judgment to make good decisions based on information gathered and analyzed.

  ▪ Considers all pertinent facts and alternatives before deciding on the most appropriate action.

  ▪ Commits to decision.

♦ Adaptability

  ▪ Adapts to changing work environments, work priorities, and organizational needs.

  ▪ Deals effectively with change and diverse people.

♦ Communication

  ▪ Expresses ideas effectively.

  ▪ Organizes and delivers information appropriately.

  ▪ Listens actively (Regulatory Affairs Professionals Society, 2016).

In all professions, there is a generally accepted set of core skills or competencies. These core competencies may include adaptability, communication, accountability and dependability, problem solving, motivation, teamwork, valuing diversity, decisionmaking and judgment, ethics and integrity, initiative, planning and organizing, and stress tolerance. Core competencies should be reflective of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors required to shape the culture, values, and goals of the program or agency; independent of specific roles; and transferrable across levels, teams, or departments.

Competencies can help do the following:

♦ Inform job qualifications, interview questions, and selection criteria for recruiting and promoting the right people, and ensure that job candidates are assessed against the same framework or criteria

♦ Identify and prioritize individual training and development needs and target resources for newly hired and existing staff

♦ Define performance expectations by providing transparent, clear, and consistent expectations and a common language for assessing performance and providing feedback

> Competencies reflect the ability to do something successfully or efficiently. Competencies provide a way to assess what an individual values or does not value, knows or does not know, and can or cannot do.

♦ Provide a template for career development goals that makes the best use of staff's abilities and prepares them for growth and advancement in the field

Competency Framework

A competency framework breaks down competencies into easy-to-understand proficiency statements and provides a foundation for the following:

♦ Hiring and selection of people with the right skills and behaviors for the job

♦ Designing training and curricula

♦ Guiding career development

A competency framework is based on two dimensions: *domains* and *levels*. Domains reflect broad categories of professional responsibilities identified as competencies. For example, communication is a core competency for licensing inspectors (Regulatory Affairs Professionals Society, 2016).

Levels refer to distinct professional phases or stages of a career ladder, such as basic, intermediate, and advanced. Levels are cumulative—inspectors must meet the knowledge, skills, and abilities for lower levels before they can progress to higher levels.

For each domain and level, the competency framework presents proficiency or performance statements that describe what a regulatory inspector is expected to know and do. These statements can be used as a foundation for developing organization-specific competency models. A competency framework is generally developed through the following:

♦ Business plan analysis

♦ Job and task analysis

♦ Behavioral interviews

♦ Observing highly effective performers

Competency frameworks may be designed entirely within the organization or based on off-the-shelf frameworks.

Key Competencies for Licensors

The following list of key competencies for licensors was developed through job-task analysis with input from various state child care licensing programs, as well as a review of other professional competencies:

♦ Supporting child development

♦ Caseload management

♦ Accountability

♦ Communication

♦ Supporting compliance and quality improvement

♦ Monitoring and enforcement

♦ Leadership

The process of developing key competencies should involve the licensors currently performing the work, but this list is offered as a starting point. In the following tables, each of competencies above is described in terms of proficiency across three factors: knowledge, skills and abilities, and behaviors and other characteristics. Some of the proficiency statements can be used as the foundation for developing job descriptions and interview questions for licensor positions, while others reflect proficiency that would be developed over time and be more appropriate for evaluating experienced staff. Applying weights to competencies can provide further distinction between those necessary for entry-level positions and those required for higher-level positions.

Supporting Child Development

Proficiency Statements	
Knowledge	♦ Knows early childhood developmental milestones across all domains
	♦ Knows children's typical abilities and behaviors at all ages
	♦ Has knowledge of early care and education principles such as developmentally appropriate practices and experiences that foster positive brain development and emotional competence
	♦ Has knowledge of developmentally appropriate environments, equipment, and toys for children at all ages
	♦ Has knowledge of effective child care classroom management; for example, staffing, room arrangement, managing challenging behaviors, and creating safe environments
Skills and abilities	♦ Recognizes and can explain that potential health and safety hazards differ based on the age of the children
	♦ Able to access resources to encourage the full participation of all children
	♦ Able to explain accommodations required in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for children with known or suspected disabilities
	♦ Recognizes and can explain program policies and observed teacher behaviors that support healthy child development
	♦ Provides information regarding the State's early learning and development guidelines
Behaviors and other characteristics	♦ Supports the inclusion of children with special needs
	♦ Shares knowledge of current research on topics such as early brain development, continuity of care, and the rationale for rules
	♦ Describes how developmentally appropriate environments and practices decrease challenging behaviors in the classroom

Caseload Management

	Proficiency Statements
Knowledge	♦ Possesses a working knowledge of regulatory principles and processes ♦ Has a working knowledge of the functions, services, and program priorities of the licensing program ♦ Possesses knowledge of federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to program operation, such as those pertaining to zoning, discrimination, disabilities, and child abuse and neglect
Skills and abilities	♦ Able to understand and follow established policies and procedures ♦ Able to interpret, articulate, and apply laws and regulations ♦ Demonstrates good time management skills, such as establishing priorities and completing work by established deadlines ♦ Demonstrates good organizational skills ♦ Demonstrates investigative skills such as information collection and analysis techniques ♦ Able to use computer, mobile devices, and software applicable to the position; complete reports; and communicate via text, email, and telephone ♦ Able to assess compliance history, assess risk, and make recommendations for enforcement actions ♦ Willing and able to perform all work-related travel
Behaviors and other characteristics	♦ Shows attention to detail when assessing applications and staff qualifications and preparing for a visit ♦ Demonstrates cultural sensitivity and responsiveness when working with providers of diverse backgrounds or those serving refugee or migrant families

Accountability

Proficiency Statements	
Knowledge	♦ Understands the organization's vision, mission, and values ♦ Possesses knowledge of procedures to identify and report child abuse and neglect ♦ Understands maintaining clear professional boundaries[5]
Skills and abilities	♦ Uses good judgement in consistently monitoring and enforcing requirements ♦ Effectively communicates with supervisory, policy, and legal staff ♦ Establishes and maintains effective working relationships ♦ Encourages public access to information while protecting confidentiality
Behaviors and other characteristics	♦ Demonstrates a strong professional work ethic, including respect for others, dependability, time management, and self-motivation ♦ Acknowledges how one's own values, beliefs, attitudes, and preferences affect interactions with providers and families ♦ Vigorously upholds applicable provisions of law related to public disclosure, avoidance of conflict of interest, observance of due process requirements, management of public records and information, and management of confidential information (NARA, 1995, p. 1) ♦ Discloses any conflicts of interest, biases, or improper activities that could jeopardize the credibility of the licensing program ♦ Demonstrates the efficient use of agency materials, equipment, and resources ♦ Seeks guidance when the expertise of others is needed ♦ Examines own practices through self-reflection and self-assessment and ongoing personal growth ♦ Welcomes input and feedback about strengths and weaknesses and integrates feedback to the best of his or her ability

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[5] Information about maintaining clear professional boundaries is included in the *Code of Ethics for Regulators* (NARA, 1995).

Communication

Proficiency Statements	
Knowledge	♦ Is familiar with strength-based communication strategies such as reflective listening and motivational interviewing
	♦ Has an awareness of and sensitivity to backgrounds that are diverse in family structure, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, culture, and language
Skills and abilities	♦ Able to communicate effectively both orally and in writing, using correct grammar and sentence structure
	♦ Encourages the expression of multiple perspectives
	♦ Able to understand the body language of others to interpret cues
	♦ Able to communicate assertively and respectfully
	♦ Able to clearly communicate and differentiate between violations that must be corrected and recommendations for improvement
	♦ Able to support problem-solving with providers and use conflict resolution strategies to manage and resolve conflict
	♦ Develops and effectively presents information to different audiences, such as providing workshops at state conferences
	♦ Able to communicate effectively with different audiences
	♦ Responsive to providers and families who speak other languages
Behaviors and other characteristics	♦ Demonstrates sensitivity and compassion when responding to others' difficulties
	♦ Works effectively with difficult or hostile individuals to resolve problems
	♦ Develops mutually respectful and trusting relationships with providers and colleagues
	♦ Communicates a shared commitment to children's well-being

Supporting Compliance and Quality Improvement

	Proficiency Statements
Knowledge	♦ Has knowledge of early care and education principles such as developmentally appropriate practices and experiences that foster positive brain development and emotional competence
	♦ Has knowledge of effective child care classroom management; for example, staffing, room arrangement, managing challenging behaviors, and creating safe environments
	♦ Understands and can describe how compliance with health and safety licensing standards is the foundation for quality
	♦ Understands the unique characteristics and needs of diverse providers; for example, license-exempt providers, school-age programs, partnerships, rural programs, and tribal programs
	♦ Understands how the attitudes, beliefs, and traditions of individuals with diverse ethnic, cultural, religious, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds; sexual orientations; and genders affect health and child care factors
	♦ Understands the diverse needs of providers, families, and children and the impact of culture on them
	♦ Knows of and can describe community resources to support providers and the families they serve
	♦ Has knowledge of state and local professional associations and opportunities for providers to obtain training and grow professionally
Skills and abilities	♦ Able to access and share resources with providers to encourage the full participation of all children
	♦ Able to establish trust and credibility with child care provider staff
	♦ Able to identify and understand learning styles of providers and staff
	♦ Able to provide consultation and technical assistance that is concrete, respectful, and responsive to providers' needs
	♦ Differentiates between technical assistance on meeting requirements and consultation on best practices
Behaviors and other characteristics	♦ Supports the inclusion of children with special needs
	♦ Encourages providers to create a culture of continuous quality improvement and deliver high-quality services
	♦ Shares knowledge of current research on topics such as early brain development, continuity of care, and the rationale for rules
	♦ Demonstrates a commitment to collaboration with other partners such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the quality rating and improvement system, and local fire and health officials who have different roles but the same goal of child well-being
	♦ Explores options to correct violations as well as strategies to ensure that they don't occur again
	♦ Provides resources that are individualized and responsive to the needs and readiness of each provider
	♦ Demonstrates cultural sensitivity and responsiveness when working with providers of all

Proficiency Statements
backgrounds and those serving refugee or migrant families
♦ Shares culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate and research-informed materials with providers
♦ Builds relationships with other agencies and service providers to encourage linkages between programs, families, and community resources
♦ Provides recommendations for forms or document changes that are responsive to diverse needs of providers and families served, such as ensuring that forms adopted as part of the rule development process are family friendly and inclusive of all families seeking services (for example, using the term "family" rather than "mother" and "father")

Monitoring and Enforcement

	Proficiency Statements
Knowledge	♦ Possesses knowledge of all licensing standards, their importance and rationale, and how they are observed and measured
	♦ Possesses knowledge of how health and safety issues affect the care, well-being, and education of children in out-of-home care
	♦ Understands other programs that affect child care operations, such as: funding programs; other monitoring systems; and child care, Head Start and prekindergarten partnerships
	♦ Possesses knowledge of state mandated reporting laws on suspected child abuse and neglect, as well as abuse and neglect prevention efforts
	♦ Understands the full range of progressive administrative and enforcement actions and their appropriate use
	♦ Understands the balanced use of authority
	♦ Demonstrates knowledge of legal sufficiency with regard to administrative and enforcement actions
Skills and abilities	♦ Able to navigate and safely travel to programs
	♦ Documents observations and discussion in clear, concise, and detailed plain language without subjective comments or judgement
	♦ Writes documents with cultural, linguistic, and racial responsiveness
	♦ Conducts investigations that are thorough and fair
	♦ Interviews children, providers, and complainants in a reassuring and effective manner
	♦ Evaluates objectively a facility's operation in relation to agency policies and procedures and licensing requirements
	♦ Demonstrates a balanced use of authority through actions, decisions, and communications
	♦ Shows respect for cultural, ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity
	♦ Documents violations consistently across programs and in accordance with agency policies, procedures, and requirements
	♦ Demonstrates observation skills and attention to detail
	♦ Articulates the importance of monitoring and corrective action in ensuring children's well-being
	♦ Conducts risk assessment of programs and responds appropriately
Behaviors and other characteristics	♦ Recognizes and manages biases reflective of personal values, beliefs, attitudes, and preferences and maintains mutually respectful relationships with providers and others
	♦ Effectively manages emotions when faced with difficult or disturbing situations
	♦ Negotiates with providers to an agreed-upon plan of correction
	♦ Demonstrates the balanced use of authority through actions, decisions, and communications

Leadership

Proficiency Statements	
Knowledge	♦ Knowledge of research-based practices and trends ♦ Knowledge of types of leadership and leadership philosophies ♦ Knowledge of types of group facilitation ♦ Knowledge of adult learning principles
Skills and abilities	♦ Demonstrates skills and a commitment to team building and a positive working environment ♦ Able to work independently or as part of a team ♦ Able to coordinate with other regulatory agencies ♦ Articulates and promotes the role of regulatory agencies in protecting children and supporting their optimal growth and development ♦ Articulates the agency's mission, goals, and philosophy to providers, families, and the general public ♦ Advocates for quality environments for young children with various audiences ♦ Collects and assesses data for continuous quality improvement
Behaviors and other characteristics	♦ Seeks opportunities to provide feedback and contribute to the agency's ongoing improvement; for example, participating in workgroups and focus groups ♦ Mentors new licensors and contributes to the professional growth of colleagues ♦ Is open to multiple perspectives, new information, and novel approaches to working with children, families, and staff ♦ Supports a professional culture that reflects and honors diversity ♦ Able to maintain a positive attitude ♦ Able to be empathetic to others ♦ Decisionmaking is informed by multiple sources ♦ Adapts to changing circumstances ♦ Understands the need for ongoing professional development to keep current with research and best practices in regulatory administration and early education ♦ Demonstrates openness to learning, applying what was learned, and receiving constructive criticism ♦ Possesses an understanding of and respect for the importance of families as partners in their children's development and strategies to engage them

Competency-Based Interviewing

In order to hire the best person for the job, it is important to identify the knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics required of the position. Providers are diverse in ethnicity, culture, language, and age, and it is important that licensors reflect that diversity and possess the skills required to be culturally sensitive and responsive to these differences.

By having a defined set of competencies for the licensor role, agencies can more effectively ensure that the best person is hired for the position and developed into a successful licensor.

> "The key to better hiring may be to focus more on competencies than credentials." (Katz, 2015).

Competency-based interviews, also known as behavioral or situational interviews, are interviews in which interviewers ask questions about specific situations. Then candidates answer by describing how they have handled similar situations in the past, or by describing what they would do if confronted with the situation. Competency-based interviewing is a highly effective way of measuring an individual's knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors, and how the person would apply these attributes to the job (Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

The key to a successful competency-based interview is developing the interview questions in advance and ensuring that they are designed to bring out the information needed to determine whether the interviewee possesses the desired knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics required for the position. For example, if the job requires a person to be able to analyze and find solutions to problems, the interviewer might ask, "Give me an example of a problem you recently solved on the job. Describe the process you used to find a solution?"

Competency-based interview questions are generally open ended to elicit the most information about the individual's competencies, and can be expanded with follow-up questions to gather more details. For example: "Please tell me more about…what did you….how did you....why did you?"

Questions eliciting information about how the candidate has dealt with specific situations in the past are preferable over hypothetical questions because past behavior is a strong predictor of future behavior. However, candidates with limited experience may have to answer hypothetically, particularly if the question is very specific to the job. It is also helpful to let interviewees know that you are interested in hearing about their recent examples from everyday work life, what they specifically said or did, the outcome, and what, if anything, they would do differently.

The following list of competency-based interview questions can help in assessing core competencies specific to the role of licensors.

Examples of Competency-Based Interview Questions

Competency	Sample Interview Questions
Supporting Child Development	♦ How do you keep up with the latest research on early brain development and early care and education principles? ♦ Give a specific example of how effective classroom management skills can decrease challenging behaviors in the classroom. ♦ Tell us about a time when you had to draw upon your knowledge of developmentally appropriate environments, equipment, and toys for children to address a health or safety related challenge or issue. ♦ Describe how you would identify teacher behaviors that support healthy child development. ♦ What is your experience working with or using the State's early learning and development guidelines?
Caseload management	♦ Tell us about a time you had multiple deadlines and you had to stretch to meet them. ♦ Tell us about a time you were not able to meet your deadlines. What did you do? ♦ Describe how you organize your day and what tools you use. ♦ Describe a time when you had to adjust your approach or invest more time to be responsive to differences in ethnicity or culture. ♦ Describe how you would manage multiple responsibilities and deadlines when you are faced with a facility that has serious violations and demands your time and energy. ♦ Tell us about a time when you were asked a complex question and you did not know the answer. What did you do?
Accountability	♦ Describe a time you were asked by a coworker or provider to do something inconsistent with policy and how you handled the situation. ♦ What did you do in the past if you and your supervisor disagreed on a decision? ♦ Talk about the confidentiality policy in your current job and a time when maintaining confidentiality was a challenge. ♦ Tell us about a time when your supervisor assigned you additional duties and you were running out of time. What did you do? ♦ Describe what has motivated you in a previous position. ♦ Describe a situation where you received constructive criticism and your response.

Competency	Sample Interview Questions
Communication	♦ Describe a time when you were expected to write a report for your supervisor with little instruction on what was expected. ♦ Tell us about a time you had to communicate with someone with whom you disagreed. ♦ Tell us about a time when you were presented with a wide variety of information to present to a group and how you developed your presentation. ♦ Describe how you use the computer in your current job. ♦ Have the applicant go to a computer and answer the following questions in a Word document: what do feel you have to offer this position and what does it offer you?
Supporting compliance and quality improvement	♦ Describe a time you were asked to provide complex technical assistance regarding how to correct a regulation or policy violation. ♦ What would you say to a distraught provider whose actions have led to a child being injured? ♦ Give a specific example of a time when you encountered an unhappy customer or provider and what you did to assist that person and defuse his or her anger. ♦ What strategies have you used to develop trust and credibility with a client?
Monitoring and enforcement	♦ Tell us about a time you worked with an individual who was part of a culture that was unfamiliar to you. ♦ Describe a time you were in the position of holding another person accountable for an error he or she made. ♦ Tell about a time you handled a situation that had a negative impact on others. ♦ Describe a situation where you had to defend or justify a decision you made. ♦ Give an example of how you handled a person who was rude to or angry with you.
Leadership	♦ Tell us about a specific time you helped a coworker without being asked. ♦ Tell us about a time you undertook a project that required a lot of initiative on your part. ♦ Give a specific example of a time when you motivated coworkers. ♦ Tell us about a time when you were asked to do something outside your job or personal responsibilities. How did you respond? ♦ Tell us about a time when you were in a position of needing the cooperation of several other people to complete a task. What did you do? ♦ Give an example of a time when you recognized a need for change and tell us about your efforts to implement the change. ♦ Tell us about a time you had to change your opinion based on new information.

Note: For more examples of competency-based interview questions please see "333 Helpful Interview Questions" at https://hrs.boisestate.edu/process/support/333HelpfulInterviewQuestions.pdf.

Performance Evaluation

Competencies can assist in defining performance expectations, or measurable or observable performance statements, used to describe how the competency is displayed when performed well on the job. For example, if the competency is communication, and one of the skills within that competency is listening, the proficiency statement may read, "Understands and learns from what others say." The performance measures or observable performance behaviors for this skill may read as follows:

- Asks clarifying questions that elicit clearer or more detailed information

- Confirms understanding by paraphrasing or summarizing what others have said

- Not more than one exception noted during the evaluation period

Performance evaluations help identify areas for professional development or personal growth; for example, grammar and spelling review or training, documentation basics, and time management and organization training.

Performance reviews can also help indicate when employees are ready to practice new job tasks or advance to the next skill level, increasing their responsibility and compensation.

> "Assessing a candidate against specific competencies clarifies their strengths and weaknesses, making it easier to target any development that may be needed if they are appointed."
>
> (Centre for Professional Learning and Development, 2010, p. 4).

Training and Professional Development

Licensor competencies are the foundation for ensuring a highly skilled workforce. After an individual is hired and is working under a competency-based job description, the licensor competencies should play a role in determining that person's training and professional development activities. Learning objectives based on competencies can provide the basis for selecting training materials, content, and methods.

Data collected from a 2014 survey of licensing agencies (National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, 2015) showed that health and safety issues and state regulations are the most common topics covered in required training for licensing staff. Staff may also receive training on topics such as licensing and enforcement policies, documenting inspection results, identifying child abuse and neglect, cultural competence and sensitivity, balanced use of authority, ethics, communication, and providing technical assistance or consultation.

Supplemental activities may also include participating in training on child development, early learning guidelines, and the State's quality rating and improvement system, attending an administrative hearing, or completing a series of topical online training courses. A complete course of training for new inspectors—including classroom, web-based, and on-the-job training—may take anywhere from one to six months. New staff may also accompany consultants and supervisors in the field to observe them conducting inspections and evaluating compliance, documenting observations, and conducting complaint investigations and interviews. Licensing supervisors generally monitor the progress of employees throughout the training period to identify any areas needing clarification and determine when they are ready to begin inspections independently, using the performance measures or evaluation as a guide.

Employee development is an ongoing effort that requires the leader or manager to assess each individual employee's current and future development needs. Once they are on the job, inspectors must keep up to date on changes in policy and procedures, standard requirements, automation changes, and organizational changes. They must also have ongoing continuing education to keep up to date on the latest research regarding child development, health, and safety in order to evaluate compliance and offer accurate technical assistance and up-to-date resources.

One strategy for increasing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of newly hired employees is prioritizing competencies and building activities holistically through the organization's strategic plan. A more targeted approach with individuals is to use professional development plans based on needs identified through formal and informal methods (including self-reporting and performance evaluations).

It is the supervisor's role to monitor and guide professional development plans and activities in order to ensure that employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities are being strengthened. Successful leaders not only prepare their employees to perform their current job duties, they must also develop individuals to perform additional duties in the future. There are a variety of strategies for supporting individuals' professional growth, such as mentoring, coaching, resource reviews, and coursework.

Summary

Parents want what is best for their children but may have limited information and resources. They may feel distressed or conflicted about leaving their child in someone else's care, and may turn to licensing agencies for assistance in evaluating and choosing a provider they can trust. They may need guidance on whether a situation that concerns them is a violation and how to address it with a provider or file a complaint. Similarly, most providers want to provide quality care but may lack the knowledge or education to address the challenging issues they face. In addition to meeting the physical, emotional, and social needs of children, they must also be sensitive and responsive to staff and parents who have their own issues. Working long hours does not leave much time for providers to manage their complex and demanding jobs and seek out resources. It is therefore essential that licensors have the skills and knowledge to help ensure compliance, improve quality, and reduce risks to children by communicating a shared commitment to children's well-being. But as important and sometimes overlooked is their ability to work effectively in stressful situations, demonstrate sensitivity and compassion, and develop mutually respectful and trusting relationships with providers and parents.

Using licensor competencies will help in identifying, hiring, training, and developing the right people for the job. The key competencies listed in this document have been identified as necessary for licensor success. However, it is unlikely that any candidate for a licensor position will already possess all the desired competencies. Therefore, it is important for licensing agencies to identify which competencies are necessary for individuals to possess at the point of hire versus which competencies may be developed over time. After the time of hire, ongoing evaluation of each licensor's development of the competencies is key to ensuring that any areas needing improvement are identified, and that each person receives the necessary training and mentoring needed to be successful.

Resources

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