



Five-Year Early Childhood Professional Development Action Plan for Region _____

Overview

Qualified and well-compensated professionals are essential to ensuring high-quality early childhood education programs. State policies and financing of the professional development system have a significant impact on the recruitment, quality, and retention of early childhood professionals. Through the development of an integrated early childhood professional development system guided by a state plan, North Carolina will increase its capacity to develop and retain a competent and stable early childhood workforce.

Over the last two decades there has been increasing interest in learning about the experiences of children in early care and education settings: what settings are good and how early care and education influences later school performance and behavioral patterns. In particular, we have learned a great deal in recent years about the benefits and cost of high-quality early care and education services, and how to improve programs to meet the needs of all children. This has increased the need to shift from indiscriminate training to intentional forms of professional development to build and retain a high qualified workforce. Today, like other occupations, education is the currency with which the early childhood professional development system is being constructed.

Defining Professional Development

Professional development refers to a combination of education, training and continuing education. Well-designed professional development includes a broad range of activities and audiences, and:

- benefits providers in all settings;
- responds to the needs of Early Educators at all levels, from entry-level assistants to multi-site administrators;
- spans a continuum of information and format, from short-term workshop-style training to college-level education to continuing education; and
- focuses on services that are provided to children ages birth to twelve in early care and education and school age settings.

Defining an Early Childhood Professional Development System

An ecpd system is a comprehensive approach to providing professional development opportunities. When an effective ecpd system has been built:

- Vision exists to serve all those working with children in all settings serving children birth to twelve.
- Core knowledge is delineated, a set of information and skills that all providers need to know is developed, and education and training is offered to make sure that this entire body of knowledge is transmitted.

- Requirements and incentives for providers to pursue professional development opportunities are clear.
- A continuum of education and training for all providers, from entry-level to experienced, exists.
- A system is in place to make sure that the education and training are of high quality.
- A process is developed to assess what education and training providers in a community need.
- Information about education and training opportunities is widely available.
- Information about what opportunities providers have already pursued is available for monitoring and planning purposes.
- Education and training opportunities are offered at times, in places and in languages and formats providers can successfully access.
- Increased knowledge and competence are assessed and rewarded by increasing compensation.
- Education and training are well-funded so that providers are able to attend, regardless of personal financial situations.

In addition, a well-drawn system builds on base education and articulates prior learning (education and training) into the professional development pathway for the individual; supporting forward progress toward personal education goals without redundancy and continuing education is provided by highly qualified staff. We also know from three studies of high-quality early education programs (from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s) that early care and education has long lasting outcomes for children, which produce economic benefits - when teachers are educated and compensated.

Regional Action Plans

Funding to support the facilitation of a regional early childhood professional development planning process, managed by the NC Child Care Resource & Referral Council (Council) and conducted in partnership with the NC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development (Institute) has been provided to support the development of five-year action plans. Collectively, the regional/local action plans, current research and input from stakeholders will be used to inform regional efforts and the development of a written statewide early childhood professional development (ecpd) plan as outlined in the Plan for CCDF Services in North Carolina and the implementation of a continuing education framework.

An early childhood professional development action plan, in this context, is a detailed description of how key areas will be addressed. To guide the development of five-year action plans through a series of four facilitated discussions, values and guiding principles will be provided to each team. Both electronic and print resources will be shared to support a current scan of policies, programs and practices. The current scan will provide teams with information to address their vision for 2015, developed in the first of two discussions.

Based on the vision and scan teams will develop goals. Both state and local/regional goals may emerge during the action planning process.

The goals identified will include the goal itself (see definitions below), a list of partners who will be responsible for achieving the goal, a timeline and benchmarks to determine when the goal will be achieved and to track progress made, assessment methods to measure effectiveness,

impact, etc. and efforts to inform stakeholders (outreach strategies), resources needed (human, fiscal, inkind, etc.). Strategies that address each goal may include state and/or local/regional strategies. State strategies are not required for each goal.

The collective results will be summarized into a five-year action plan format. The action plan will be shared with team members prior to submitting an electronic version to the NC Institute for Child Development Professionals. As noted earlier, the Institute will utilize the action plans as a source of information to inform the development of a state early childhood professional development plan.

Values & Guiding Principles

Values

A high quality ecpd system values, at a minimum:

- high quality care and education, as defined by research
- diversity in all aspects for both teachers and children
- equitable and sufficient wages warranted by professionals
- integration of services and resources across sectors
- the engagement of all stakeholders to evaluate and inform the system

Guiding Principles

Does this policy, program or practice:

- increase integration among sectors/agencies?
- improve quality?
- support diversity, inclusion and access?
- increase workforce compensation?
- use resources creatively and effectively?
- allow us to assess the impact, both qualitatively and quantitatively?
- require outreach to assure the population to be served is aware of it and resources to support it?

Definitions

Key Area – A key component of an early childhood professional development system. Key areas include access, continuing education, professional standards, compensation, and collaboration & planning. *Ex:*

Compensation

Goal - A specific, measurable occurrence, object, or accomplishment to achieve or obtain in the future; it points to where you want to end up, not where you are today. *Ex: All Early Educators will be compensated at a rate equivalent to NC public school teachers and reflective of education earned.*

Strategy – A strategy is the means by which objectives are pursued and obtained over time. Strategies may be in the form of a policy, program or practice, *Example of a program: Child Care WAGE\$ Tier I reimbursements will be implemented by January 15, 2011.*

Policy – A policy provides guidelines for the implementation of a professional development project, program or service. *Ex: All Early Educators attending college in our county will receive at least a Tier I salary supplement.*

Program – A planned sequence and combination of activities designed to achieve specified goals. *Ex: Child Care WAGE\$*

Practice – A technique or methodology (i.e. mentoring). *Ex: statewide salary supplements*

Prioritizing - Priority setting in this context is used to identify input from the team regarding state priorities and local priorities. Prioritizing required a balance of competing needs of time, resources, process, services, etc.

Examples:

State

1. Provide adequate resources to support salary supplements for the workforce statewide.
2. Require local funding be used to support salary supplements statewide and provide mechanism to support distribution.
3. Tie salary supplements at state level to certification levels to support long-term tracking of workforce education and compensation levels.

Local

1. Assess compensation levels of workforce through an existing or new workforce study.
2. Gather information on current impact of existing salary supplements and determine gaps/needs.

Cites/Evidence – Provide data collected or accessed to support goals outlined in the plan. The sample profile form attached may be helpful in organizing evidence collected.

Regional Contact: _____

Region #: _____

Counties included in this region: _____

Five-Year Early Childhood Professional Development Regional Action Plan

Vision Statement: _____

| Key Area | Goal | Strategy (Policy, Program or Practice which can be measured - list in priority order by levels) | Partners (note Lead(s) and partner(s) responsible for supporting goal and strategies) | Timeline | Estimated Cost Level (choose one per strategy) |
|------------------------------------|------|---|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Access | | State: Local: | Lead(s): Supporting Partner(s): | Target Date: Benchmarks: | No cost Low cost High cost |
| Continuing Education | | State: Local: | Lead(s): Supporting Partner(s): | Target Date: Benchmarks: | No cost Low cost High cost: |
| Professional Standards | | State: Local: | Lead(s): Supporting Partner(s): | Target Date: Benchmarks: | No cost Low cost High cost |
| Compensation | | State: Local: | Lead(s): Supporting Partner(s): | Target Date: Benchmarks: | No cost Low cost High cost |
| Planning & Coordination | | State: Local: | Lead(s): Supporting Partner(s): | Target Date: Benchmarks: | No cost Low cost High cost |
| Other | | State: Local: | Lead(s): Supporting Partner(s): | Target Date: Benchmarks: | No cost Low cost High cost |