

DELAWARE FIRST COMPETENCIES FOR CENTER-BASED PRACTITIONERS

Purpose: To establish a set of core competencies for professionals working in the early care and education field in Delaware. Competencies establish standards for the early care and education field.

These competencies were developed in keeping with the following assumptions:

- Competent, well-trained professionals are the key to providing quality early care and education.
- Competencies can be used to establish standards for employment and job performance.
- There are a set of personal characteristics and attributes that support effective job performance in early care and education.
- Competencies should be considered emergent; developing over time with experience.
- Competencies are cumulative and create a continuum for professional development.

Competencies may be used:

- To design appropriate training and education
- For personal assessment of professional growth and planning for professional development
- As a tool for career counseling
- To plan for staff development
- To develop job descriptions
- To assess job performance
- As a piece of the process for issuing credentials, certificates, or licenses

Each content area is organized to include:

- A general statement that establishes the significance of the content area to early care and education.
- Required knowledge related to the content area.
- Required competencies related to the content area, outlined by job position. Competencies for any given position incorporate all the competencies of previous positions.

ATTRIBUTES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

Exhibits stable and responsible work habits

Accepts challenges and learns from mistakes

Expects continuous change

Takes time for regular reflection and self-examination

Works cooperatively with co-workers in a team effort

Demonstrates unconditional caring, warmth and respect for each child's uniqueness

Serves as a model for children through their own conduct

Exhibits the ability to be delighted and curious about children

Displays imagination and creativity

Employs humor and patience

Communicates effectively with each child, both verbally and non-verbally

Communicates effectively with adults

Shows respect for the diversity of families, children and co-workers

Exhibits ability to empathize with others

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

CONTENT AREA STATEMENT: An understanding of how young children develop and learn is at the very core of the early childhood professional's knowledge base. All further training and education builds on this foundation.

Each professional is expected to draw on this knowledge to create environments and to interact with children in ways that support their development and learning.

KNOWLEDGE: Early childhood professionals will acquire training and education allowing them to demonstrate knowledge in the following areas:

- Major theories of child development
- Typical stages of development for children birth through age 8, developmental milestones in each of the domains, and the interrelatedness of those domains; physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional
- Individual variability in development and learning
- Contextual influences on children's development
- Communication and partnerships with families to support children's development and learning
- Role of adult-child relationships and interactions in supporting children's development and learning
- Play as the context for children's learning
- Formal and informal practices and procedures for assessing children's development and learning
- Implications of child development for planning environments, curriculum, and activities
- Strategies for supporting individual children's development and learning, including children with special needs

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Application of Child Development

ASSISTANT TEACHER	TEACHER	CURRIC. COORDINATOR	ADMINISTRATOR
Assists in the implementation of curriculum	Implements curriculum for a group of children	Designs and develops curriculum	Manages and leads program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an understanding that children grow and develop through play • Demonstrates an understanding that individual differences affect children's growth and development • Uses knowledge of developmental milestones, assists children in participating at their individual level of interest and ability • Interacts with children to support their development and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses informal observation as strategy for understanding individual children's development and learning • Applies knowledge of child development and learning to establish appropriate expectations of individual children • Uses knowledge of children's family, culture, and any risk factors when planning to support the development and learning of individual children • Applies knowledge of child development to plan and implement developmentally appropriate activities and environments • Adapts activities and environments to meet the special needs and situations of individual children • Implements procedures for assessment of children • Keeps families informed about their child's developmental progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses the application of theory, research and issues related to child development and learning with staff • Designs curriculum based on child development and developmentally appropriate practice • Keeps up-to-date with the latest information about child development and learning • Uses knowledge of child development and developmentally appropriate practice to design play environments that support children's development and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and evaluates plan for assessing children's developmental progress • Articulates a program philosophy based on understanding of and focus on child development

DEVELOPMENTAL CURRICULUM PLANNING

CONTENT AREA STATEMENT: Young children learn best when they are involved in experiences and activities that appropriately promote their development and learning. It is the responsibility of early childhood professionals to design the environment, plan the curriculum and use appropriate teaching strategies in order to support each child's learning.

KNOWLEDGE: Early childhood professionals will acquire training and education allowing them to demonstrate knowledge in the following areas:

- Concepts and principles of developmentally appropriate practice
- Play as a foundation for early childhood curriculum
- Curriculum planning that supports children in acquiring self-help skills, effective communication and problem-solving skills
- Curriculum planning that supports development in each of the domains; cognitive, language and communication, physical, social-emotional and creative
- Curriculum planning for appropriate early learning in the content areas; literacy, math, science, social studies, art, music and movement
- Curriculum planning for children of different ages and stages of development
- Planning for schedules, routines and transitions to support children's learning and positive behavior
- Planning for an integrated curriculum
- Curriculum adaptation for children with special needs
- Planning for arrangement of the physical environment and selection of materials to support children's learning and development
- Providing learning opportunities that reflect children's culture and family experiences
- Teaching methods, practices and strategies that promote children's learning

DEVELOPMENTAL CURRICULUM PLANNING

Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum Planning

NOTE: Curriculum activities that promote social development are listed with Understanding Children's Behavior rather than here

ASSIST. TEACHER	TEACHER	CURRIC. COORD.	ADMINISTRATOR
Assists in the implementation of curriculum	Implements curriculum for a group of children	Designs and develops curriculum	Manages and leads program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interacts with and participates appropriately with children at all times • Asks age and developmentally appropriate questions and actively listens to children's responses • Encourages children to ask questions • Talks with children and stimulates conversation among children • Encourages and accepts children's creative expressions • Facilitates and supports children's participation in experiences and activities of the planned curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides activities and experiences that promote physical development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Large and small motor skills *Sensory experiences • Provides activities and experiences that promote cognitive development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Encourages children's curiosity, exploration and problem solving *Provides opportunities to sequence, organize, compare, and contrast • Provides activities and experiences that promote language development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Uses conversation to enrich and expand vocabulary *Helps children acquire verbal and non-verbal means of communication • Provides activities and experiences that promote creative expression: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Emphasizes spontaneity and process rather than end product • Uses naturally occurring opportunities to encourage development of self-help skills • Provides age and developmentally appropriate activities and experiences that support emergent literacy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Reads, sings, and plays games *Provides phonological, alphabet and book awareness *Makes connection between spoken and written language *Encourages verbal & written expression *Provides a print rich environment • Provides activities and experiences that support emergent math and scientific thinking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Concepts such as time, space, shape, pattern, quantity and number *Nature *Scientific inquiry • Provides activities and experiences that support emergent thinking in social studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *People and how they live *People, the environment and community *Geographical concepts of space and location—home, neighborhood and community • Provides activities and experiences that support creative expression: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Music *Art *Drama *Dance and Movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designs integrated curriculum that supports children's emerging abilities in each of the content areas • Designs integrated curriculum that supports children's learning in each of the developmental domains • Uses The Delaware Early Learning Foundations in designing curriculum • Provides technical assistance for staff to support curriculum implementation • Designs a logical and coherent curriculum across the program for all children • Conducts ongoing assessment of curriculum planning with staff • Informs families about curriculum and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes and communicates a philosophy of curriculum • Conducts ongoing program assessment and evaluation • Ensures that staff are trained to plan and implement appropriate early childhood curriculum <p>NOTE: <i>All curriculum should be designed and implemented to be age and developmentally appropriate; and incorporate the Delaware Early Learning Foundations for School Success.</i></p>

DEVELOPMENTAL CURRICULUM PLANNING

Creating Developmentally Appropriate Learning Environments

ASSISTANT TEACHER	TEACHER	CURRIC. COORDINATOR	ADMINISTRATOR
Assists in the implementation of curriculum	Implements curriculum for a group of children	Designs and develops curriculum	Manages and leads program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows daily schedule • Supports and encourages children's participation in a variety of activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranges the physical learning environment to encourage play, exploration, and learning • Selects developmentally appropriate materials • Provides an interesting and secure environment both indoors and outdoors • Accommodates individual children's needs when planning the learning environment • Uses adult-child relationships and interactions as a resource for creating a positive learning environment • Designs age appropriate schedules, routines and transitions • Provides for extended, uninterrupted time for play • Uses technology in a developmentally appropriate manner to support children's learning • Builds on children's interests when planning activities • Plans curriculum activities that provide a balance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *quiet and active experiences *child-initiated and teacher facilitated activities *Indoor and outdoor activities *Individual, small group and large group experiences • Supports children's cultural heritage • Uses the outdoors and community as an extended classroom • Uses a variety of teaching methods appropriate to children's age and development to support learning, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *open-ended questioning *group discussion *problem-solving *cooperative learning *inquiry experiences *teachable moments • Arranges the physical environment to create a welcoming place for children • Arranges the environment to allow for typical early childhood experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *dramatic play *block play *sand and water play *sensory activities *art activities *physical activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps current on curriculum trends and revises curriculum • Supports staff in adapting curriculum and environment to support the learning of all children including those with special needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluates curriculum for effectiveness • Maintains and manages resources for appropriate curriculum delivery

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR

CONTENT AREA STATEMENT: Quality early childhood programs promote the development of young children's self-esteem, social competence and pro-social behaviors. Professionals need to have a clear understanding of children's social and emotional development and positive guidance strategies that support such development.

KNOWLEDGE: Early childhood professionals will acquire training and education allowing them to demonstrate knowledge in the following areas:

- Children's social and emotional development and maturation
- Influences on children's behavior—rate and pattern of development in all domains, temperament, special needs, family and culture
- Strategies for promoting positive behavior and developing pro-social behaviors of young children
- Positive guidance approach to dealing with challenging behaviors
- Group management strategies
- Observation and assessment of individual and group behavior of young children
- Communicating and partnering with families to support children's development of pro-social behaviors and positive self-esteem.

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR

Promoting Social Development

ASSISTANT TEACHER	TEACHER	CURRIC. COORDINATOR	ADMINISTRATOR
Assists in the implementation of curriculum	Implements curriculum for a group of children	Designs and develops curriculum	Manages and leads program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a warm, positive, nurturing relationship with each child • Responds appropriately to children's emotional needs • Accepts children's feelings and helps them to express feelings • Models positive behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps children use effective problem solving and appropriate conflict resolution strategies • Provides opportunities for cooperative play and interaction • Helps children deal with stress and change • Encourages children to show empathy and respect for others • Helps each child be accepted by the group and learn appropriate techniques for "getting along" • Establishes an environment that fosters trust, respect, cooperation and appropriate behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designs curriculum that focuses on social-emotional development and respects diverse values, cultures and individual temperaments • Keeps current on theory and research (re: children's behavior, social-emotional development and guidance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a plan and evaluates ways to help families foster positive social-emotional development <p>NOTE: <i>All curriculum should be designed and implemented to be age and developmentally appropriate; and incorporate the Delaware Early Learning Foundations for School Success.</i></p>

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR

Group Management

ASSISTANT TEACHER	TEACHER	CURRIC. COORDINATOR	ADMINISTRATOR
Assists in the implementation of curriculum	Implements curriculum for a group of children	Designs and develops curriculum	Manages and leads program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps all children under direct supervision at all times • Helps children handle daily routines, transitions and unexpected changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses group management techniques in establishing an environment that promotes positive behavior : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * creates appropriate schedules, routines and transitions * provides developmentally appropriate activities * creates appropriate room arrangements * provides sufficient and appropriate materials and equipment • Involves children in setting rules and expectations when appropriate • Establishes a positive environment focused on exploration and interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides training and technical assistance to staff regarding appropriate guidance strategies and group management techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains an adequate supply of materials and equipment to support a positive learning environment

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR

Guidance Strategies

ASSISTANT TEACHER	TEACHER	CURRIC. COORDINATOR	ADMINISTRATOR
Assists in the implementation of curriculum	Implements curriculum for a group of children	Designs and develops curriculum	Manages and leads program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is willing to examine personal beliefs about children's behavior and discipline • Supports the implementation of guidance strategies used in the program • Addresses specific problem situations or behaviors without labeling the child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies developmentally appropriate behavior and reasonable expectations for children's behavior • Modifies situations to prevent problems • Uses positive guidance strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *"I" messages *Redirection *Choices *Natural and logical consequences *Conflict resolution & problem solving *Limit-setting • Encourages children to develop self-control and use anger management • Uses encouragement to motivate children • Communicates with parents regarding developmentally appropriate behavior and expectations for children • Works with families to develop strategies with children when there are behavioral concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses observation and assessment to plan and develop individual guidance strategies • Plans for the inclusion of children with behavior issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets program expectations for using positive guidance approach for young children and their behavior • Develops and evaluates program policies for guidance of behavior • Works with families to address challenging behaviors

HEALTH, SAFETY AND NUTRITION

CONTENT AREA STATEMENT: Early childhood professionals are expected to ensure the health and safety of each child in their care. They are also expected to provide for nutritionally balanced meals and snacks to be served to children. In addition, they promote children's learning about health, safety and nutrition.

KNOWLEDGE: Early childhood professionals will acquire training and education allowing them to demonstrate knowledge in the following areas:

- Issues and concerns related to the health, safety and nutrition of young children
- Regulations and laws pertaining to health, safety and nutrition of young children in a group setting
- Planning and implementing safe environments for children
- Practices that promote the health of young children
- Practices that meet the nutritional needs of young children
- Health, safety and nutrition curriculum for young children
- Community resources

HEALTH, SAFETY AND NUTRITION General Practice

ASSISTANT TEACHER	TEACHER	CURRIC. COORDINATOR	ADMINISTRATOR
Assists in the implementation of curriculum	Implements curriculum for a group of children	Designs and develops curriculum	Manages and leads program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows all laws and regulations pertaining to health, food services, and safety. • Follows mandated reporting requirements regarding child abuse and neglect • Implements health, safety and/or nutritional plans for individual children • Supports a safe, healthy environment for all children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans and prepares a safe, healthy environment for all children • Applies knowledge of child development in promoting children's health, safety and nutrition • Shares information with families about community resources for health, safety and nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designs and assesses the health and safety of the environment for the program • Informs families about program policies and practices regarding health, safety, and nutrition • Develops plans for meeting the health, safety, and nutrition needs of all children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains children's health assessments and records • Establishes policies and procedures that ensure compliance with all laws and regulations regarding health, safety, and nutrition • Maintains the supply of materials and equipment necessary to operate the program in a healthy, safe manner • Monitors the effectiveness of health, safety and nutrition practices • Works with community agencies and professionals to safeguard children

HEALTH, SAFETY AND NUTRITION

Health and Safety

ASSISTANT TEACHER	TEACHER	CURRIC. COORDINATOR	ADMINISTRATOR
Assists in the implementation of curriculum	Implements curriculum for a group of children	Designs and develops curriculum	Manages and leads program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents accidents and incidents as necessary • Performs first aid and CPR when necessary • Supervises and interacts with children to ensure their safety and health • Carries out established emergency procedures, including disaster plans • Knows and uses safety equipment appropriately • Practices infection control, including appropriate hand washing and diapering procedures • Practices Universal Precautions • Helps children to adopt good health and safety practices • Performs daily health check, including observing for signs of abuse and neglect • Recognizes and responds to signs of acute and chronic illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selects materials and equipment so as to ensure safety • Establishes safety rules and precautions for children • Teaches children about safety • Implements self-help activities that encourage independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans health and safety curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assesses and evaluates health, safety and nutrition plans and practices
Nutrition			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervises the serving of nutritious meals and snacks • Practices safe food handling procedures • Maintains sanitary environment • Interacts with children during meal and snack times, promoting appropriate social behavior • Monitors safety during meal and snack times • Helps children to adopt good nutrition habits. • Models good nutrition practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of the serving of nutritious meals and snacks • Teaches children about good nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans nutrition activities and experiences as part of the curriculum • Supervises menu planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates with families about food preferences and special needs

WORKING WITH FAMILIES

CONTENT AREA STATEMENT: Families play a critical role in young children's development and learning. Early childhood education professionals need to appreciate that role and be able to communicate with families, to form supportive partnerships, and to involve families in the program. A positive relationship between families and professionals becomes a support for children.

Knowledge: Early childhood professionals will acquire training and education allowing them to demonstrate knowledge in the following areas:

- The role of families in children's development and learning
- Understanding and respect for the diversity of family structure, culture, and lifestyle
- Effective techniques and strategies for communicating with families
- Strategies for involving families in early care and education programs
- Knowledge of community resources for families and children

WORKING WITH FAMILIES

Communicating With Families

ASSISTANT TEACHER	TEACHER	CURRIC. COORDINATOR	ADMINISTRATOR
Assists in the implementation of curriculum	Implements curriculum for a group of children	Designs and develops curriculum	Manages and leads program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows rules for confidentiality Communicates with families in a manner that respects diversity Communicates with families regarding children's daily activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responds to family member's questions and concerns Shares information with families about the curriculum Implements effective conflict resolution techniques Talks with families about their child's progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a process for sharing information about children's progress Informs families about program philosophy and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes and evaluates a plan of practices and procedures for communicating with families
Supporting Families			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates respect for the family role as primary educator. Demonstrates respect for the diversity of family structure, function, and lifestyle and child rearing practices Knows when to seek support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes and responds to stressors that families face Supports the parenting role by providing relevant information about child development and learning Provides information about community resources. Supports families in the early intervention process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports families in making transitions and dealing with crises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes and evaluates plan for response to family crises
Involving Families			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates positive and appropriate relationships with families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fosters family participation in the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for ways families can play an active role in their children's care and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures opportunities for family members to participate in program evaluation and decision making.

PROFESSIONALISM

CONTENT AREA STATEMENT: Every profession has a body of knowledge that defines the profession and requirements which guide professional growth and development. In addition, there are standards for professional and ethical behavior. Everyone working in the field needs to understand what it means to be an early care and education professional and has an obligation to make a commitment to ongoing personal and professional growth.

KNOWLEDGE: Early childhood professionals will acquire training and education allowing them to demonstrate knowledge in the following areas:

- Standards for personal/professional behavior that lead to quality care and education of young children
- Practices that support ongoing personal and professional growth and development for self and others
- Ethical professional behavior as outlined in NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct

PROFESSIONALISM
Professional Growth and Development

ASSISTANT TEACHER	TEACHER	CURRIC. COORDINATOR	ADMINISTRATOR
Assists in the implementation of curriculum	Implements curriculum for a group of children	Designs and develops curriculum	Manages and leads program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins to reflect on own professional practice • Uses constructive feedback to improve performance • Seeks knowledge to improve professional practice • Participates in setting goals and carries out professional development plan • Uses available professional resources • Completes annual training hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in professional activities and/or organizations to enhance professional growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporates advanced training into professional development plan • Keeps up-to-date about Delaware issues in early care and education • Keeps up-to-date about current issues, advocacy and legislative efforts in the field • Keeps up to date on current research and trends in early care and education field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively supports professional growth and development of staff • Designs staff development opportunities appropriate for adults • Engages in promoting and advocating for quality early care and education

PROFESSIONALISM

Personal and Professional Behavior

ASSISTANT TEACHER	TEACHER	CURRIC. COORDINATOR	ADMINISTRATOR
Assists in the implementation of curriculum	Implements curriculum for a group of children	Designs and develops curriculum	Manages and leads program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes and maintains appropriate professional boundaries • Demonstrates good work habits • Follows all program policies and procedures • Maintains confidentiality • Adheres to licensing regulations • Performs effectively as a member of a team • Interacts with children, families and co-workers in a positive and respectful manner • Practices effective communication skills • Uses problem-solving skills • Follows NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct • Demonstrates appropriate supervision of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages in reflection about teaching and children • Promotes quality programs and services for children and families • Articulates personal philosophy of early care and education • Models professional behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses professional program standards in program planning • Uses professional resources to improve practice • Incorporates current issues and research into curriculum design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bases decision-making on knowledge of current research, data, trends and approaches • Advocates for children and families • Maintains an environment that encourages the professional behavior of staff • Practices effective team-building skills • Ensures that the program policies and procedures adhere to code of ethics • Develops a plan for evaluation and improvement that incorporates recognized professional standards • Demonstrates a management style that fosters and enhances quality • Keeps staff informed of current trends and issues in early care and education in Delaware and nationally.