

## **Professional Development Portfolio**

*for parent educators, home visitors, and other professionals who work with families*

The core competencies in the field of family support describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes you need to be successful in your work supporting families, whether you work as a home visitor, parent educator, or in any other position where you help parents understand and support their children, improve their parenting skills, and reach their personal and family goals. You may not use all of the core competencies in your current job, but they are all relevant for your professional development in this field.

### **Using your Portfolio**

This Professional Development Portfolio is designed to help you keep track of your training and professional development experiences that relate to the core competencies.

You are responsible for maintaining your own portfolio. Your supervisor may ask to see your portfolio when you meet to talk about your professional development, or to plan training opportunities for the staff of your agency or organization. You may find this portfolio useful if you are applying for a new job and want to demonstrate what you have done to advance your professional development. Most importantly, the portfolio and core competencies are designed to help you look at the big picture of your professional development. Are there areas you never seem to get training in? Are there other areas you gravitate towards? You can use the core competencies as a tool to help you organize your professional development, whether you want to focus on a particular area or broaden your horizons.

### **Contents of your Portfolio**

There is a tab for each of the core competency areas. Behind each tab you will find a detailed description of the attitudes, skills, and knowledge required of a family support professional within that competency area. That sheet includes a description of what all workers should be able to do related to that competency area, and what an advanced worker would be able to do. You may find that you are an “advanced worker” in certain areas but not others. If you are new to the field, you should focus on getting the basic skills in each area before pursuing additional training that would help you become an advanced worker in certain areas. Finally, this sheet lists some examples of continued learning that would increase your competency in a given area. These are just examples—many other training opportunities will also relate to each core competency.

You will also see a “Professional Development Log” behind each tab, where you can record the trainings you attend that enhance your knowledge, skills, and attitudes in that area. When you receive a certificate for completing a training, you can add the certificate to your portfolio behind the core competency area it relates to. If you do not receive a certificate, you can still enter the training in your log, and perhaps save other materials from the training (such as a brochure describing a conference, or handouts you received) in your portfolio.

Of course, some trainings will relate to more than one of the core competency areas. You may wish to record a training on your log for each of the relevant areas and make a note about where you have filed the certificate or other information from that training.





## Competency Area 1

# Child and Lifespan Development

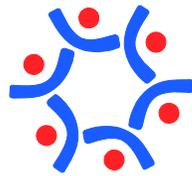
- Theories of human growth and development
- Basic “ages and stages” in infant, toddler, child, and adolescent development
- Critical issues in child development and infant mental health, including brain development, attachment, emergent literacy and the developmental importance of play
- Principles of adolescent and adult development and how development affects parenting
- Culture, gender, language, temperament and family influences on human growth and development

**All workers** have had instruction in theories of human growth and development; have tools to assist families in assessing developmental milestones and planning for usual and expected development; and demonstrate an understanding of “development in context” and the influence of family, culture, language, temperament and gender.

**Advanced workers** demonstrate flexibility in approaches to the promotion of usual and expected development; understand multiple perspectives and theories of human growth and development; take parents’ developmental needs into account when working with families; and assist families to set reasonable goals and meet unique challenges.

**Continued learning** might focus on specific topics (e.g., infant mental health, brain development, language development, recognizing developmental delays) or specific parts of the lifespan (e.g., adolescent development, aging).





## Competency Area 2

# Dynamics of Family Relationships

- Theories of family interaction
- Developmental stages of parenting and family life
- How and why changes in families take place, including typical growth and development of family members as well as family disruption and unexpected changes
- Theories of change and communicating about change with families
- Value of intergenerational relationships to family life and child-rearing
- Appropriate and effective communication within families
- Differences between healthy and unhealthy family dynamics
- Strategies to deal with stressors that may negatively affect family interaction, such as financial hardship

**All workers** have been exposed to theories of family interaction and parenting stages; can describe effective communication strategies for families; have an understanding of how changes such as divorce and remarriage affect family members; and can assist families in dealing with typical changes.

**Advanced workers** apply knowledge of family dynamics to advise families on their communication styles; refer families to other professionals (e.g., financial planners, marriage and family therapists) as appropriate; and use a theories of change approach in helping families manage both typical and unique challenges.

**Continued learning** might focus on current issues that impact parenting and family life such as dual career homes, family disruption and loss, incarceration, or single-parenthood.



### Competency Area 3

## **Family Support and Parenting Education: Principles, Methods and Approaches**

- Strength-based, family empowerment approach to family support work
- Concepts of prevention, enrichment, and goal setting
- Types of parenting education and family support methods
- Importance of evaluation to demonstrate outcomes and assess effectiveness of parenting education and family support
- Effective, creative methods for outreach and retention of participants
- Adult and adolescent learning styles, and teaching strategies that meet adult and adolescent learners' needs
- Skills for work with individual families
- Group process and facilitation skills

**All workers** understand the principles of family empowerment and are able to identify strengths of families; recognize the value and purpose of parenting education and family support; use basic, core curricula in work with families; engage participants in evaluation of programs and services; and have skills in group facilitation and/or one-on-one adult education.

**Advanced workers** develop, critically assess, and evaluate programs, curricula and related materials for parents and families; are able to integrate and modify core curricula as needed to meet family needs; and access additional resources when needed.

**Continued learning** might include training in a range of teaching styles; integration of parents with cultural and language differences or special needs and challenges into programs; advanced home visiting training; or program planning and evaluation.





## Competency Area 4

# Guidance and Nurturing

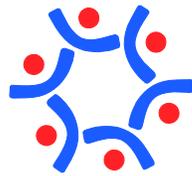
- Impact and importance of parental nurturing and supervision for infant mental health and for the social and emotional development of children of all ages
- Strengths and weaknesses of different forms of guidance and discipline and their long-term effects
- Guidance techniques, such as responsiveness, creating a safe environment, setting limits, goal-setting, role modeling, and dealing with anger and other emotions – and how to model these techniques for parents
- The critical role of parents in supporting children’s learning, including provision of rich learning and language experiences within the family, adult scaffolding of children’s learning, encouraging and supporting positive dispositions to learning, and the appropriate uses of media and other resources
- Individual differences and effects of temperament and personality of adults and children
- Strategies parents can use to encourage the development of character, ethics, and self-control

**All workers** can identify positive guidance techniques for parents of children at various stages of development and explain the benefits of positive discipline; and work with parents to develop individual parenting plans.

**Advanced workers** advocate for and model the use of positive discipline techniques; promote understanding of differences in temperament and personality within families; and understand how their own style, temperament and family experiences affect their interactions with families.

**Continued learning** might include courses focused on discipline for children of a particular age; different types of parenting plans; or the influence of child and parent temperament on parenting styles.





## Competency Area 5

# Health and Safety

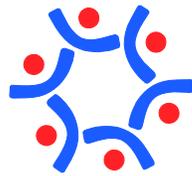
- Essential components of safe and healthy physical and emotional environments for infants, children, adolescents, and adults
- Signs and definitions of child abuse and neglect, including state statutes and procedures for reporting child abuse and neglect
- Characteristics and needs of parents, children, and families at risk for abuse and neglect
- Signs and definitions of domestic violence and awareness of resources in the community for victims of domestic violence
- Typical behaviors of sexual abuse perpetrators and warning signs that children have been sexually abused
- Impact of abuse, neglect, and domestic violence on family members
- Signs of substance abuse (including alcoholism) and other compulsive behaviors and their effects on families
- Signs and symptoms of mental illness in family members, such as depression in mothers and ADHD in children
- Importance of healthy diet, nutrition, and physical activity for children's and adults' health and well-being
- Strategies for talking about health and safety issues with families

**All workers** recognize signs of child abuse, child neglect, mental illness, substance abuse, and domestic violence and take appropriate steps to get help for families; are able to advise parents on making their homes and vehicles safe for children; have a general understanding of other health issues that affect children, parents, and families; and know where to find additional information when needed and where to refer parents for additional support. Mandated reporters of child maltreatment understand how to appropriately discuss that role with parents and how to encourage self-report whenever possible.

**Advanced workers** are able to educate families about issues related to health; and have in-depth knowledge of health and safety resources, as well as risk factors, in the community.

**Continued learning** might be in specific areas of child health; maternal depression; how chronic mental or physical illness affects families; substance abuse; or the effects of stress on families.





## Competency Area 6

# Diversity in Family Systems

- Respect and appreciation for diversity in families
- Non-judgmental approach to working with families whose background and/or current circumstances are different from their own
- Specific needs and characteristics of diverse family systems including:
  - Parents from diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds;
  - Adolescent parents;
  - Single parents (divorced or never-married parents);
  - Blended families;
  - Parents or children who have physical, emotional, or developmental disabilities;
  - Same-sex parents;
  - Families in poverty;
  - Homeless families;
  - Parents who have adopted or are caring for children in foster care;
  - Grandparents and extended families;
  - Migrant, immigrant, and/or transient families; and
  - Other family systems
- Ways that culture, socioeconomic status, and language impact child-rearing practices and relationships in the home
- Effect of racism and discrimination on families and child rearing

**All workers** recognize and respect diversity among families; understand that parenting practices, traditions, and beliefs differ from one family to another; are aware of their own racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural background, and how that might affect their work with families; and use culturally appropriate strategies to ask about families' needs and support them in finding solutions.

**Advanced workers** demonstrate skills to advocate, individually and in the community, for families from minority groups and families living in poverty; have in-depth understanding of social and cultural groups represented in the local community; know ways to negotiate resolutions when values conflict; and support parents and families in finding culturally acceptable responses to challenges.

**Continued learning** might include increasing knowledge of social and cultural groups in the local community and resources available to those groups; language training in a language relevant to the local community; how to work through interpreters; strategies for supporting parents and children with special needs; or training in working with specific types of families as described above.



## Competency Area 7

# Relationships among Family, School, and Community

- Roles of the community, including formal social institutions (e.g., schools, churches, childcare centers) and the informal social network (e.g., families, friends, playgroups), in nurturing, protecting, and supporting families
- Advocacy in the community on behalf of children and families – including how parents can be advocates for their own children
- Methods to help families identify and access financial and social resources in their communities
- Effects of families’ spiritual and cultural affiliations on their involvement in the wider community
- Value of parent/family involvement in learning, and the critical role of parents as primary teachers
- Impact of mass media on families and how families can use media as a tool to assist in learning
- Effective methods to attract and involve teachers, childcare providers, other agency staff, businesses, and community groups in family support and parenting education initiatives

**All workers** recognize the overlapping roles of families, childcare providers, schools, and communities in raising and educating children; and connect families with other resources available in the community.

**Advanced workers** play a role in the broader community advocating for children and families; collaborate with other agencies and community players to increase support for families; help families overcome barriers to receiving other resources in the community; and inform relevant agencies of unmet needs among families in the community.

**Continued learning** might include strategies for community development and organizing; engaging community partners in family support work; or supporting parents in their role in their children’s education.



## Competency Area 8

# Professional Practice and Self Care

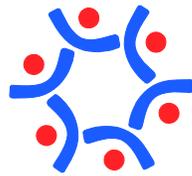
- Professional boundaries and limitations
- Professional ethics and legal issues in family support and parenting education
- Integration of current research into professional practice
- When and how to refer parents to other professionals for assistance
- Conflict resolution skills
- Working with difficult people (colleagues, other agency staff, program participants)
- Stress management
- Using supervision appropriately to assist in professional role and self-care
- Planning for personal safety on the job

**All workers** are aware of and strive to maintain professional boundaries; have a thorough understanding of confidentiality and other legal and ethical issues in family support; pursue additional training in the field; and know when to ask for help in a professional situation. Workers take appropriate steps to ensure their own personal safety and remove themselves from dangerous situations.

**Advanced workers** have skills in conflict resolution; recognize when they need supervision or other assistance; and refer families to other professionals when appropriate.

**Continued learning** might include mediation and conflict resolution; refresher courses in professional boundaries and ethics; or resource sharing and networking with other family support professionals.





## Glossary

### **Advanced Worker**

An individual who

1. has had extensive practical training related to a particular topic,
2. demonstrates flexibility and is able to deal with unique challenges in a topic area, and/or
3. is able to teach colleagues, whether formally or informally, about a topic

### **Competent**

Adequately qualified for a given task or job

### **Core Competencies**

A set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that individuals need to be successful in a field of work or type of job

### **Family Support Professional**

An individual who works with families and supports them in achieving their goals

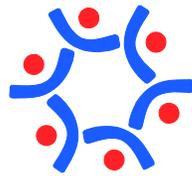
- We use this term primarily to refer to parent educators, home visitors, and staff of family resource and support programs. However, other professionals who work with families and children may find that the core competencies of family support professionals are relevant to their work—and are welcome to use this portfolio to track their professional development.

### **Professional Development**

The process of becoming more competent in a field of work

- Professional development often occurs formally through conferences, seminars, and courses. It also happens informally through work experience, supervision, networking, and reflection.





# Core Competencies and Professional Development in the Field of Family Support

## Project Background

The core competencies and professional development project is a collaboration between Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board and several other Wisconsin agencies with an interest in parent education, family support, and the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The goals of the project are:

- To ensure high-quality family support services for families in Wisconsin,
- To increase recognition of the professional experience, training, and education that parent educators, home visitors, and other family support professionals bring to their work, and
- To encourage high standards for quality training for professionals who work with families.

The Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board convened an Advisory Committee to work on core competencies and professional development in 2003, and contracted with Cailin O'Connor to research existing systems of professional recognition in family support, develop a plan for Wisconsin, and draft the core competencies.

The development of the core competencies was partially funded by the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant through the Department of Health and Family Services. The Child Abuse Prevention Fund of Children's Hospital and Health System supported the printing and distribution of these professional development portfolios.

## Research Base and Acknowledgements

The core competencies were developed through a process of research on systems being used in other states, a survey of family support professionals in Wisconsin, and discussion with workers, supervisors, and managers in a variety of programs around the state. More details of this research are available on the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board website at <http://preventionboard.wi.gov>.

The development of the core competencies relied heavily on experience and models from other states, especially the "Core Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills for Parent Educators" developed by the University of North Texas Center on Parent Education. In addition, family support professionals around the state of Wisconsin gave their input to help tailor the core competencies to reflect their professional development needs, concerns, and strengths.

