Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals

Virginia's Early Childhood Development Alignment Project

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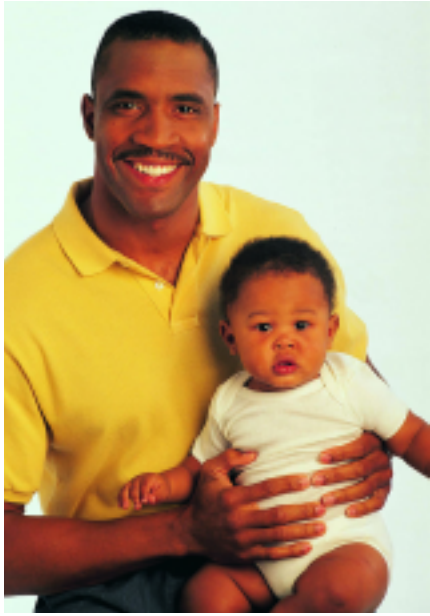

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Virginia's Alignment Project

Introduction

Without a doubt, the early years – from birth to kindergarten – comprise the most extraordinary period of development in a child's lifetime.

Learning begins in infancy when a child's development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward learning serves as the basis for healthy development and lifelong achievement. Infants and young children are by nature avid learners – enthusiastic, creative scientists who observe, explore, experiment, and practice skills until they are mastered, and then continue to the next challenge.

Although they learn much through independent exploration, infants and young children need competent adult guides to provide the critical elements of high quality learning environments at optimal times. Skillful adults – whether parents, grandparents, child care providers or teachers - provide the safety and security, both physical and emotional, that support young learners through adventures of discovery and mastery. Skillful adults provide more than affectionate relationships that support and foster confidence; they structure the environment to provide challenges, coach the learning process by providing feedback, and offer interpretation to confirm and to inspire. These skillful adults become learning partners who mentor young children as they explore the world in which they live.

It is vital that we support Virginia's young children as they prepare for school and life success. The Alignment Project documents serve as guides to assist adults in their important roles with young children.

Guiding Principles

The Alignment Project documents reflect a set of guiding principles that have served as a valuable compass in developing these resources:

1. Families are the first and most influential teachers of young children.
2. Every child develops at an individual rate, possesses unique characteristics, and exhibits an array of talents and interests regardless of family background, culture, special need, experience, or ability.
3. Optimal learning occurs when we recognize that all aspects of a child's development (i.e., social and emotional, approaches to learning, language and literacy, cognitive, and physical) are inextricably interrelated and nurtured through a combination of active exploration, play, social interaction, and thoughtfully planned activities that capitalize on children's natural tendency to seek ever higher levels of challenge to master.
4. Early learning experiences draw upon and enhance the connections between families, early childhood programs and services, schools, and the community.
5. Quality early learning experiences for children are guided by research-based knowledge and practice.
6. All children are capable and competent learners, and they learn best when they are included with their peers.

Developing the Alignment Project Documents

These frameworks were developed through a comprehensive and collaborative process involving many sources of information, expertise, and guidance.

The process began in February, 2006, through an intensive initiative known as the Alignment Project. Though spearheaded by the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Alignment Project team is comprised of dedicated professionals from many agencies and organizations, both public and private. Each of the team members brought insight and wisdom reflecting years of experience, expertise, and commitment.

Following the development of the original documents, numerous professionals in the field reviewed critically the documents and provided suggestions for improvement. In addition, six focus groups were held in six different regions across the Commonwealth to gather broad feedback on the Alignment work, as well as specific feedback concerning draft documents. The participating individuals represented various relevant constituent groups, selected to offer a full range of perspectives, thereby ensuring inclusion and integration of varied needs, programs, and cultures to the greatest extent possible. Working within a tight timeframe, the reviewers provided valuable edits and additions, contributing substantively to the final products.

Finally, the Alignment Project benefited in significant ways by reviewing and incorporating guidelines and competencies gleaned from early childhood initiatives from numerous states and local coalitions. Thanks to the graciousness and generosity of key representatives from each state and locality in granting permission for the team to learn from their respective processes and products, the Alignment Team feels assured that Virginia's frameworks reflect best practices across the nation.

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Focus Group Participants

More than one hundred parents, teachers, directors, child care resource and referral agency staff, and other interested partners attended the focus groups in Abingdon, Fairfax, Harrisonburg, Richmond, Roanoke, and South Hampton Roads.

An additional focus group comprised of early childhood educators Debra Daily, Renee Dino, Regina Ihsane, Claudia Knapp, and Rowena Seaman from Williamsburg-James City County offered important feedback concerning the content and format of the *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals*.

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Anthony Conyers, *Commissioner of Virginia Department of Social Services*
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Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals

Welcome to Virginia's *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals!*

This document is a comprehensive resource for those who work with and care about young children. We hope you will find this document valuable and that you will share it with others.

Purpose and Goals

In order to support optimal learning and achievement for young children, Virginia must have a highly skilled early childhood education professional workforce that embraces a spirit of life-long learning and continuous quality improvement. To articulate the skills and competencies desired in that workforce, Virginia's *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* outline standards for competent practice, identifying what early childhood professionals must know, be able to do, and care about to provide quality early care and education.

Because these competencies can be measured or demonstrated, Virginia's *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* can serve as a guide for improving teaching and learning. They are intended to support improvement of quality in early childhood programs by clearly articulating best practices for adults who are supporting the growth and development of children from birth to kindergarten. In essence, the professional development system itself is never a finished product and should continually evolve based on the most recent research and be refined to best meet the needs of the population it serves. To that end, early childhood practitioners need opportunities to learn and grow to become more effective in their profession.

Virginia's *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* may be used by adults working in various capacities with young children and by related organizations or agencies, including:

- **Providers, practitioners, and teachers** to assess their level of knowledge and skill in various content areas and to identify specific areas of need for future professional development (e.g., training/education);
- **Directors and program administrators** to specify training/education requirements for staff job descriptions, to develop staff training/education plans and policies, and to establish a salary scale based on staff educational achievement;
- **Trainers and training organizations** to plan and to organize training/education and to promote training/education opportunities;
- **Higher education faculty, staff, and administrators** to assess current program content to determine course development and to coordinate and design course content to facilitate transfer and articulation agreements;
- **Federal, state, and local agencies** to develop and implement policies that will enhance professionalism in the field; and for
- **Professional development efforts** to create the framework for a career development system that allows professionals to achieve recognition in the field, provides access to competency-based training/education, and promotes compensation commensurate with educational achievement.

Presentation of Content Areas and Levels

Virginia's *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* are presented in specific core areas of competency that correspond to traditional curricular areas in early childhood education. Further, the core competencies address best practices for a safe and optimal learning environment for young children, effective relationships and interactions with children and their families, and strong program management for early childhood administrators. Each area describes the knowledge and skills professionals need in order to support optimal growth and learning of children from birth to kindergarten.

The eight core content areas used to organize Virginia's *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* are:

- Health, Safety, and Nutritional Practices;
- Understanding Child Growth and Development;
- Appropriate Classroom Observation and Assessment;
- Partnering with Families and Communities;
- Learning Environment;
- Effective Interactions;
- Program Management; and
- Teacher Qualifications and Professional Development.

Importantly, all early childhood professionals working with children from birth to kindergarten, regardless of role or setting, need to master a core body of knowledge. However, professionals may apply the knowledge differently depending on their roles and settings. For example, infant-toddler professionals need to develop competency in supporting beginning language development, and preschool professionals need to develop competency in supporting specific language skills such as speaking in more complex sentences and following multi-step directions. Program directors, school administrators and supervisors need skills in supervision to ensure that staff demonstrate competency in supporting developmentally appropriate language acquisition. These variations require different applications of knowledge. For this reason, the content area of Program Management applies to directors and administrators as well as to family care providers who have responsibility for program management.

Within each content area, four competency levels are presented to establish a continuum from preliminary skills to an advanced level of academic preparation and varied experience. Professionals progress from one level to another through **various paths** including formal study, training, mentoring and coaching, and reflection on practice. Importantly, levels are defined for early childhood professionals serving varying roles. Advancement does not imply administrative promotion resulting in little or no direct interaction with children. Rather, as all professionals develop, they participate in continuous quality improvement by acquiring new skills, refining previously developed skills, promoting skill development among others, adding to the knowledge base of the field of early childhood education through research and reflective inquiry, and working with others to advocate policies and quality programs that nurture the development of all children. Early childhood professionals are encouraged to advance their knowledge and skill sets across content areas.

Competency Levels

Professionals at…

- **Level I:** implement practices according to program guidelines and policies.
- **Level II:** demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development.
- **Level III:** demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills.
- **Level IV:** demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities.

The four levels are intended to be cumulative; a professional working at Level IV has knowledge and skills to meet the competencies at Levels I, II, and III. At all levels, adults who support the growth and learning of young children continue their participation in professional development activities and increase their knowledge and skills within each of the content areas.

Content Area Organization

Each of the eight content areas includes a **rationale**, or an explanation for the inclusion of each competency area. Following this rationale is the related **knowledg**e base outlining the key research-based indicators in which the competency area is grounded. Finally, a set of **practices based on knowledge** is included to provide specific approaches and strategies to foster children's healthy growth and development.

Rationale:

Children's growth and development, learning, and overall well-being are dependent on safe and healthy physical and psychological environments and on sound nutrition. Competent early childhood professionals, therefore, know their responsibilities under applicable laws and regulations, and they develop policies and procedures to ensure healthy practices that are sensitive to families, employ teaching practices that support children as they become increasingly independent, and work collaboratively with other professionals to make community resources available to children and their families.

Knowledge:

1. Children thrive when their most basic needs of health, safety, and nutrition are met.
   - Health, safety and nutrition practices match children's developmental stages and individual needs.
   - Healthy, safe environments respect both the physical and social-emotional well-being of young children from birth to kindergarten by addressing issues of sanitation, hand washing, use of universal precautions and appropriate responses to emergency care situations that respect children and their diverse reactions to people, places, and situations.
   - Early childhood professionals maintain the confidentiality of health records and health information.
2. Threats to health and safety such as diseases or physical, sexual, and psychological abuse or neglect are often manifested in observable physical, emotional, or behavioral symptoms.
3. Families hold values and concerns regarding health, safety, and nutrition for their children that reflect their personal and cultural beliefs.
   - Families participate with early childhood professionals in developing health, safety, and nutrition policies and practices.
   - Families share information about their individual children's health needs (particularly for children who are medically fragile or who have disabilities) and work collaboratively with early childhood professionals to ensure that their children's needs are met.
   - Families share information about their children's food preferences, allergies, and cultural practices.

4. Children engage in active learning experiences to develop health-promoting self-help skills and to construct an understanding of health, safety, and nutrition.
   - Children make choices among activities and use a variety of materials and equipment in safe, but challenging, environments both inside and outside.
   - Children know and rehearse evacuation and other safety procedures with guidance from early childhood professionals.
   - Children develop self-help skills as they dress for the weather, wash their hands, serve themselves snacks and meals, assist in preparing foods, select toys and participate in clean-up activities.
   - Children engage in activities that allow them to be active and quiet.

5. Community resources and health support services are available for children and their families through early childhood programs.
   - Health screenings are available for young children.
   - Information on community and health resources is made available to families.
   - Provision of needed services to medically fragile children and to those with special needs is facilitated.

Practices Based on Knowledge:

Sound health, safety, and nutritional practices provide the foundation for development and learning. Competent early childhood professionals, therefore:

1. Ensure that children's basic needs of health, safety, and nutrition are met by implementing health policies, practices, and procedures that support children and their families in maintaining healthy lives, preventing injuries and preparing them to respond appropriately to emergencies or injuries;

2. Are alert to indicators of possible illness and to child abuse or neglect and are prepared to respond appropriately if such indicators are observed;

3. Implement dietary practices that support healthy growth and development while remaining sensitive to family preferences;

4. Communicate with families about health and dietary concerns as well as about community resources that support healthy living for children and their families; and

5. Implement practices that allow children to become independent and knowledgeable about healthy living.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Early childhood professionals at ALL LEVELS have knowledge related to:	Professionals at Level I implement practices according to program guidelines and policies. They:	Professionals at Level II demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development. They:	Professionals at Level III demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills. They:	Professionals at Level IV demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities. They:
1. Policies, Practices, and Procedures				
1.1 General Policies/Procedures	Follow laws, regulations, policies, and procedures for health, safety, and nutrition such as: • Performing a daily health check • Documenting health information • Monitoring for up-to-date immunizations and routine health screenings as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control of the United States Public Health Service (CDC-USPHS), and the Academy of Family Practice, taking action to ensure that the services are obtained as a condition for entry or continued enrollment • Maintaining emergency contact information • Identifying and delineating instructions for child's health needs (e.g., allergies or chronic illness)	Implement: • Policies regarding confidentiality, health, safety, and nutrition • Health assessments of children • Arrangement for advice from health consultant (as needed)	Implement: • Health assessments • Recommend referral and ongoing follow-up to community health and social service agencies	Analyze, evaluate, and apply current theory and research related to health, safety, and nutrition policies and procedures.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
1.2 Control of Communicable Disease	Routinely wash hands (adults and children) according to best practices recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Examples include, but are not limited to: • Before and after eating/handling food, administering medication, and playing with water used by more than one person • After diapering, toileting, handling bodily fluids, handling pets or animals, and playing in sand boxes • Before and after feeding a child • After arrival at center or when moving from one group of children to another • When leaving the center for the day • After handling garbage, raw meat or cleaning • Sanitize toys, surfaces, and other items that come in contact with body fluids after each child's use (e.g., after child puts toy in mouth) • Clean table and counter surfaces daily (additionally when needed) • Weekly clean toys not in contact with body fluids (additionally as needed) • Use universal precautions to avoid/control blood-borne pathogens (e.g., where bodily fluids come in contact with surfaces used by others such as in the diapering area, food service area) *(continued)*	Assess each child's health status daily, objectively document and, if signs of communicable disease are observed: • Notify authorized person • Isolate the child from contact with others until picked up by an authorized person	Maintain current knowledge regarding health, safety, and nutrition concerns in the community in order to inform families and to develop or to update procedures	Provide leadership for developing and implementing procedures to prevent the spread of communicable disease, including: • Develop plan for sharing information with families • Inform others when it is necessary to secure services of health consultant • Establish plan for interim care of children who show symptoms of communicable disease and must be isolated until picked up • Arrange an agreement with health consultant for ongoing consultation to prevent spread of disease

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
1.2 Control of Communicable Disease (continued)	• Isolate or exclude individuals with symptoms of communicable disease • Use appropriate procedures for diapering or changing clothes in case of toileting accidents • Use appropriate procedures for handling food • Separate food preparation and consumption areas from diapering or toileting areas • Communicate with families of children exposed to communicable disease • Monitor water used for activities to prevent spread of disease (e.g., water must be clean, children do not drink water used for play, children with hand sores may not participate in water play)			
1.3 Routine Oral Hygiene	Implement guidelines for preventing tooth decay and spread of germs through: • Proper cleaning of the mouths of infants who do not yet have teeth • Appropriate feeding practices (e.g., not using bottle containing milk or juice as a pacifier) • Good nutrition • Routine tooth brushing • Proper storage of toothbrushes • Plaque removal (flossing is recommended after gaps between teeth have closed)	Conduct oral health screenings for each child Create playful ways to engage children in oral hygiene routines	Provide guidance to staff and family members about oral health topics such as: • Prevention of tooth decay through tooth brushing • Appropriate feeding practices to prevent tooth decay • Causes of tooth decay and how adult dental health affects child's dental health • Recommendations regarding the use of fluoride • Recommendations regarding the use of tooth sealants • When to begin dental visits and the importance of finding a dental home	Maintain current knowledge of evidence-based best practices in oral health and provide leadership for implementing practices, and sharing information based on that knowledge with children, families, and staff

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
1.4 Reduction of Environmental Hazards	Monitor the environment for hazards such as, but not limited to: • Allergens and asthma-inducing substances • Toxic chemicals or gases • Mold • Improper or broken equipment • Extreme heat, cold, or sun • Insect-borne disease • Vehicle traffic • Safe storage and administration of medications • Animals (program or visiting pets) without proper immunizations or unsuitable for children	Implement systematic procedures to monitor environmental hazards Develop and implement (in consultation with appropriate agencies and consultants) both initial and ongoing methods to monitor the facility and premises for safe indoor and environmental air quality and water purity, unless on a public supply (e.g., radon, carbon monoxide, hidden sources of mold spores, improper venting, etc.)	Maintain current knowledge and inform others about environmental hazards	Maintain current knowledge of identifiable environmental hazards and risks, and establish procedures for reducing the risk of occurrence
1.5 Sanitation Procedures	Implement guidelines for adhering to laws/regulations and recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics for Sanitation Procedures	Plan routine implementation and monitoring of approved sanitation procedures	Model and help others implement best practices for sanitation procedures	Oversee the program staff, assistants, or substitutes to ensure that sanitation procedures are followed
1.6 Prevention of Injuries	Prevent injuries by practices such as, but not limited to, the following: • Maintaining clutter-free space for children to play • Inspecting physical environment and equipment and removing safety hazards • Supervising children by sight and sound • Establishing and maintaining procedures that children follow in order to promote safe use of equipment • Arranging safe entry/exit areas, with special attention to motor vehicle traffic and fall hazards • Maintaining safe travel conditions (if responsible for transporting children)	Ensure that safety equipment, such as smoke alarms and fire extinguishers, child safety seats, helmets, and gun safety locks are in working condition, know how to use them, and understand that modifications are made (when needed) for children with special health needs and/or physical challenges	Design and monitor the learning environment to reduce the risk of preventable injuries and other emergencies (e.g., check for safety recalls on supplies, toys or equipment and follow guidance to eliminate the hazard; monitor compliance with any asbestos management plan; monitor housekeeping and maintenance routines, etc.)	Plan, implement, assess, and modify policies and procedures designed to eliminate preventable injuries and emergencies (e.g., assess and develop hazard management plans; traffic, transportation and pedestrian safety; injury prevention by types, such as burns, falls, drowning, poisoning, shock; environmental hazards such as lead, asbestos, etc.)

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
1.7 Immediate Response to Injuries	Attend to injuries according to pediatric first aid training and reporting requirements	Possess the skill and knowledge for administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)	Monitor response to injuries and make suggestions for improvement	Develop policies and procedures for: • Responding to, reporting, and documenting injuries • Analyzing injuries, near-injury incidents, and identified hazards to decrease risks (e.g., through re-engineering program methods and further training of staff and children) • Responding to emergencies for all children and staff, including those who have been identified as having special health needs or physical challenges that may need specialized intervention
1.8 Follow-Up Response to Injuries	Follow policies for: • Documenting and reporting injuries • Communicating with family members about an injury • Assuring the comfort and care of other children while injured persons are receiving attention	Maintain an accessible current list of phone numbers for contacting parents and community services in the event of an injury	Model for and help others acquire skills for appropriately responding to injuries	Maintain current knowledge of correct procedures for responding to emergencies and fears, and share this information with others
1.9 Emergency Preparedness	Know and practice procedures for appropriate response (including emotional support) in the event of an emergency such as fire, severe weather, or an act of violence	Use various strategies to help children understand emergency procedures and the nature of plans to ensure their safety and care in the event of an emergency	Plan and inform others of appropriate response procedures (including emotional support) in the event of emergencies such as fire, severe weather, or an act of violence Know and use community resources available for post-event grief and recovery counseling or other assistance that may be needed in especially severe situations (e.g., serious injury or death of a child or staff, post traumatic stress following natural or manmade disasters, etc.)	Establish disaster preparedness policies/procedures and emergency response plans, including agreements with community resources for emergency assistance

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2. Abuse/Neglect				
2.1 Suspected Abuse/Neglect	Recognize signs of possible emotional distress, abuse, neglect or exploitation, and follow established procedures for documenting and reporting possible occurrences in an immediate and responsive way	Help others learn to recognize signs of possible emotional distress, abuse, neglect or exploitation, and follow established procedures for documenting and reporting possible occurrences in an immediate and responsive way	Stay up-to-date and share with others information related to recognizing, documenting, and reporting possible abuse, neglect, or exploitation	Establish procedures for documenting and reporting suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation and include this in staff training
3. Nutrition And Dietary Practices				
3.1 Nutrition	Recognize dietary needs associated with age-related development and appropriate foods for special needs of children. If food is served, it is from a menu provided by a professional who understands the dietary needs of young children.	Plan or provide input to ensure the provision of nutritious meals (if meals are served) that meet the required guidelines from the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	Plan and evaluate menus (if meals are served) or provide input to ensure that they meet guidelines for sound nutrition including special dietary concerns	Ensure that nutritional components of the program (if any) are planned, implemented, and assessed on an ongoing basis
3.2 Food Selection and Preparation	Provide clean drinking water, and, if food is served: • Offer a variety of nutritious foods • Exercise strict attention to the safety of all children with food allergies • Serve only foods that reduce the hazard of choking and other health risks • Follow regulations regarding any food brought from home • Provide age-appropriate opportunities for children to participate in mealtime preparation or serving	Plan and serve nutritious meals (if food is served) that meet the required guidelines (per USDA, VDH, and CACFP) and that have been prepared using methods to maintain maximum nutrition	Model and help others acquire skills needed for meeting USDA, VDH, and CACFP guidelines (if responsibilities include food selection and/or preparation)	Oversee the program to ensure that, if food is served, it is safe and nutritious and that all applicable guidelines are followed and monitored to continuous improvement

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3.3 Mealtime Behaviors	Model eating behaviors for children that are conducive to healthy living including: • Creating a setting that is safe, relaxed, and conducive to conversation • Gradually introducing new foods in ways that enable children to enjoy a variety of nutritious foods	Implement these practices: • Provide eating utensils, serving equipment, tables and chairs that are the size that can be used comfortably by children • Incorporate family style meals to help children be comfortable during mealtimes and to assist children in learning self-help skills • Divide responsibility at mealtime between the adult (provide food and encouragement) and the child (decide what to eat, how much and whether to eat)	Model and share with others ways to create a mealtime atmosphere that facilitates the development of healthy eating practices	Oversee program to maintain nutrition and mealtime as an integrated part of the program by developing and evaluating mealtime policies that outline expectations of staff, assistants, or substitutes, and children (according to age) for mealtime Review curricula and program practices to integrate food and dining with appropriate opportunities to learn about food's role in culture and social customs, food production and preparation, and health and nutrition
3.4 Response to Food Preferences	Encourage children to eat foods being served while remaining sensitive to preferences	Observe children during mealtimes to become familiar with their individual eating behaviors, patterns and skills	Plan food-related activities that respect family and cultural beliefs and practices	Maintain and share with others current evidence-based research on activities and practices related to food preferences, beliefs, and practices

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
4. Communication with Families				
4.1 Respect	Demonstrate respect in communicating with parents regarding parental concerns for their children's health, safety, and nutrition	Recognize and accept cultural health, safety, and nutrition practices while maintaining regulatory and science-based standards	Model and help others acquire skills to recognize and to accept cultural health, safety, and nutrition practices while maintaining regulatory and science-based standards	Work with families to develop nutritional menus that respect health and nutrition of their children, while maintaining regulatory and science-based standards
4.2 Communication Regarding Policies	Follow policies for informing families of current health concerns in the program	Identify the need for changes and/or new policies for informing families of current health concerns in the program	Plan procedures and help others develop strategies for communicating health policies and concerns	Work with families to develop, implement, and evaluate policies related to children's health, safety, and nutrition
4.3 Communication Regarding Special Needs	Stay informed of health, safety, and nutritional needs of individual children in the program	Strategically adapt various aspects of the learning environment, curriculum activities, and interactions with others to meet special health-related needs of children	Communicate knowledge of resources for meeting special health-related needs (e.g., help families learn proper use of adaptive equipment)	Design, implement, assess, and improve systems for communicating with families regarding special needs of individual children
4.4 Communication Regarding Nutrition and Food	Communicate with families regarding the children's eating patterns, mealtime skills, food needs, and food preferences	Coordinate with families to help ensure the program practices meet their children's needs	Consult with families about their children's special nutritional needs or food allergies and ensure that program adaptations are developed and implemented when necessary	Maintain and share knowledge of current theory and research on communicating with families concerning food-related issues

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5. Health Education				
5.1 Basic Health Practices	Teach and support children in effective use of hand washing procedures, and use personal health and safety practices known to enhance well-being	Facilitate children's understanding of: • Basic health concepts • Importance of good health • Behaviors that contribute to good health	Design, implement, and evaluate curriculum activities emphasizing healthy bodies, healthy behaviors, and healthy environment	Analyze, evaluate, and apply current theory and research to health, safety, nutrition curriculum and teaching practices
5.2 Nutrition Education	Provide mealtime experiences that establish healthy eating habits	Use a variety of strategies (e.g., posters, displays, play experiences, cooking, demonstrations, children's stories) to facilitate children's understanding of basic nutrition concepts and healthy eating patterns	Plan and guide learning experiences that nurture healthy food choices (i.e., provide nutrition education as part of the curriculum)	Oversee the program to promote continuous improvement in planning, implementing, and assessing learning experiences related to healthy eating patterns
5.3 Safety Education	Teach children simple safety rules and practices, enforcing them consistently, including limits related to the use of equipment and space Plan and practice emergency and safety procedures for emergencies such as fire, natural or manmade disaster	Facilitate children's understanding of: • Meaning of safety • Practices that contribute to safety at home and in the learning environment • Specific safety procedures	Share information with staff and families about resources, including curricula and ways to facilitate children's understanding and use of safety practices	Oversee the program to promote continuous improvement in planning, developing, implementing, assessing, and improving learning experiences related to safety

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5.4 Education for Healthy Self-Care	Talk about healthy behaviors as they are carried out during daily routines (e.g., brushing teeth, eating nutritious food, exercising) Model behaviors that reflect respectful care of one's own body, including but not limited to: • Personal safety • Handwashing • Health-promoting eating behaviors and food choices • Oral health education (i.e., good hygiene, control of plaque, how dental caries develop, prevention of dental caries) • Taking medications • Passenger safety • Importance of rest and sleep • Dialing 911 for emergency help	Capitalize on children's interest in bodies to teach healthy self-care Seek and use health education materials from various sources such as health departments, health consultants, and nutrition councils	Integrate learning experiences on healthy lifestyles as a part of daily routines Model and encourage others to develop proficient skills in content and methods of early childhood education for healthy self-care	Oversee the program to promote continuous improvement in planning, implementing, evaluating and improving learning self-care learning experiences
5.5 Health and Safety Resources	Awareness of community health, safety, and emergency resources	Use community healthy and safety resources for benefit of children and families Use services of health consultant and, if food is served, the services of a dietitian, and/or public health nutritionist	Advocate for health, safety, and nutrition policies that will positively impact all children in the community	Collaborate with community groups and agencies (e.g., Department of Health, Department of Homeland Security) to identify health, safety, and nutrition issues or concerns Develop plans and policies for addressing those concerns; provide educational opportunities and information; and facilitate service provision to families and their children

Rationale:

Child development is the foundation upon which early childhood practice is based. Because the psychomotor, socioemotional, cognitive, and linguistic developmental domains are inter-related, early childhood professionals in all types of programs (e.g., family child care homes, early childhood education centers) must comprehend both the processes of development and the adult's role in supporting each child's growth, development, and learning.

Knowledge:

1. Human growth, development, and learning become progressively complex over time and are influenced through a variety of experiences and interactions.
   - Growth, development, and learning proceed in predictable patterns reflecting increasingly complex levels of organization across the lifespan.
   - Each developmental stage has distinctive characteristics; however, progression occurs over time, building from the experiences of earlier stages.
   - The psychomotor, socioemotional, cognitive and linguistic domains of development are integrated within the child so that as one area is affected, other areas are also affected.
   - Development proceeds at varying rates from child-to-child, as well as across developmental domains for individual children, reflecting the unique nature of each child.
   - Development and learning are lifelong processes that must be nurtured in the adults who care for children.
   - Parents and family members grow and develop in their understandings of their children as learners and as members of communities outside the home.
   - Community members grow in their ability to implement programs and practices that meet the developmental and learning needs of young children.
   - Early childhood professionals recognize that as members of the profession, they interact with other early childhood professionals as lifelong learners.
2. Because growth and development are generally predictable, early childhood professionals can recognize milestones of healthy development and signs of potential delay or disability.
3. Children express their developing abilities, interests, and learning in a variety of ways; therefore, assessment must reflect this diversity of expression.
   - Because growth, development, and learning occur in a variety of ways, documentation and assessment tools and strategies must capture this variety.
   - Early childhood professionals must be able to comprehend the patterns of typical and atypical development as they observe and interpret children's developmental progress.
   - Information gathered on children's growth, development, and learning is shared with early childhood professionals and with parents/guardians to provide ongoing support for continued progress or intervention.

4. Child development theories and research guide practice for early childhood professionals.
   - Developmental theories and ongoing research on human development and learning inform professional practices in the field of early childhood development and education.
   - Research in human development, learning, and teaching young children serves as a guide to planning, implementing, and reflecting on practices employed by early childhood professionals.
   - Based on current research on typical and atypical development, early childhood professionals implement inclusive practices that support and maximize development and learning for all children.

5. Children are active learners who draw on their direct physical/sensory and social experiences to construct their own understandings of the world around them.
   - Children develop a sense of competence and the ability to interact effectively in social contexts as they live and play in environments characterized by mutual respect.
   - Children construct knowledge about the world in which they live through child-initiated and teacher-supported play.
   - Children develop small and large motor skills through playful activity with peers and caring adults.
   - Children develop communication skills as they interact with other children and with adults who play and talk with them.
   - Children develop the ability to think and solve problems as they play with materials, ideas, people, and with various components of the natural environment.
   - Children develop abilities to think about and respond in creative ways to the world in which they live as they use their imaginations to create new possibilities through playful activity with materials and other people.

6. Children are best understood within the contexts of family, culture, and society.
   - Although children are unique individuals, their interactions with family members influence their development, dispositions, and learning even as children impact their families.
   - Families also interact within environments and cultures, influencing and being influenced through multiple interactions.
   - Early childhood professionals are aware that families and community members are vital members of the broader learning community who contribute to children's healthy growth, development, and learning.
   - Society serves as a broad context in which children and their families live, providing resources and limitations that support healthy growth and development.

Practices Based on Knowledge:

Based on current theories and ongoing research in the areas of human growth, development, and learning, early childhood professionals in various care and education settings (e.g., child care centers, family child care homes):

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the principles and patterns of child development.
2. Use knowledge of child development and learning to identify the strengths and challenges of children with typical and atypical development.
3. Use practices that are responsive to the unique abilities, temperaments, learning styles, and genetic influences on young children as individuals.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the impact of family, environment, culture, and society in the development and learning of young children.
5. Strategically facilitate development by nurturing children's active engagement in learning through playful activities.
6. Collaborate with other professionals, families, and community members to enhance the development and learning of all children.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Early childhood professionals at ALL LEVELS have knowledge related to:	Professionals at Level I implement practices according to program guidelines and policies. They:	Professionals at Level II demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development. They:	Professionals at Level III demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills. They:	Professionals at Level IV demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities. They:
1. Basic Child Development				
1.1 Developmental Patterns and Principles	Recognize basic patterns of development that characterize age groups (e.g., 0-3 mo., 4-6 mo., 6-9 mo., 9-12 mo. 12-18 mo., 18-24 mo., 24-36 mo., 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds, 5-year-olds), while also understanding that individual children do not follow these general patterns precisely	Identify physical, motor, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional milestones of development	Share information on child growth and development with other professionals and family members	Communicate major theories, research, and issues relevant to child growth, development, and learning to early childhood staff or assistants, families, and community stakeholders
1.2 Adaptation of Practices as Development Proceeds	Are aware that children of different ages and developmental levels require different methods of care, education, and guidance	Adapt practices for nurturing children as development progresses	Model for others how to adapt educational practices to facilitate development at increasingly complex and challenging levels	Share knowledge with others regarding current theories, research, and policies that enhance development and learning from birth to kindergarten
1.3 Developmental Domains	Demonstrate awareness that development occurs in different domains (e.g., physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional)	Describe the different domains of development Demonstrate awareness that development can progress at various rates in different domains	Help others understand how development occurs in different domains and that development can progress at various rates in different domains	Nurture ability in others to comprehend that rates of development vary across domains

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
1.4 Interconnectedness of Domains	Recognize that areas of development are interconnected	Understand that active learning experiences can facilitate development in more than one domain simultaneously	Use knowledge of interconnectedness of domains to: • Design holistic learning experiences that capitalize on the interconnectedness of domains to promote development • Explain the behaviors of children based on development across different domains	Share with others (e.g., family members, assistants, staff) current theories and research that explain how development is interconnected across domains and how this information can be applied in facilitating early childhood development
1.5 Stages Versus Continuous Development	Demonstrate awareness that development can be described in terms of broad stages within which development proceeds gradually and continuously	Explain how continuous incremental changes are related to broad developmental stages	Help others comprehend the educational implications of viewing development as continuous versus stage-dependent	Advocate to others practices that foster continuous developmental progression while using stages or benchmarks to guide expectations and plan curriculum
1.6 Variability in Developmental Milestones	Recognize that the age ranges in which development typically occurs are broad and overlap	Use observations, work samples, and other assessment tools to determine a child's current skills and abilities	Communicate to others how development is assessed and the implications of assessment for curriculum development	Stay up-to-date on best practices (derived from evidence-based research) for assessing developmental status, make resources available to staff for ongoing developmental assessments, and analyze date collected

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2. Typical and Atypical Development				
2.1 Recognizing Variation As Typical	Demonstrate awareness that developmental variations and challenges occur in both typical and atypical development	Describe the normal range of variation in typical development	Identify the unique patterns of behavior that distinguish typical from atypical development	Help inform others of current theory and research on the range of variation in developmental patterns and timelines
2.2 Recognizing Atypical Development	Recognize skill levels that suggest children's development is atypical, whether being advanced or delayed in comparison to the average child of the same age	Compare children's developmental levels with typical milestones to identify whether a child's skills, behavior, and development are similar to those of most children of the same age	Know how to use observations, work samples, and other assessment tools to appropriately determine and to address current skills and abilities	Oversee the program (i.e., schools, center or family child care home), secure resources and services for developmental assessment
2.3 Adapting the Learning Environment	Recognize that the learning environment needs to be structured to support children who have special needs due to advanced or delayed development	Modify the learning environment to accommodate children's individual, unique, and special needs	Have knowledge of evidence-based best practices related to inclusion, including how to locate resources and services for children with special needs	Ensure that staff, assistants, families, and community members are informed of current trends in educating and nurturing children with special needs
2.4 Indicators of Risk	Demonstrate awareness that certain genetic and environmental factors increase the likelihood of developmental delays or disabilities	Recognize risk factors, delays or disabilities that may indicate a need for special services	Use knowledge of specific developmental delays, developmental disabilities, and risk factors to refer children for specialized services	Assist others in securing consultants to assist with assessments and curriculum adaptations for children with special needs
2.5 Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs)	With help, can integrate goals from IFSPs and IEPs into daily activities and routines	Integrate goals from IFSPs and IEPs into daily activities and routines	Participate in evaluation and assessment coupled with formulation of IFSPs and IEPs	Take responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating, and modifying policies and procedures for IFSPs and IEPs
2.6 Recognizing and Respecting Developmental Challenges	Recognize and respect developmental differences associated with physical, cognitive, emotional or social challenges	Demonstrate awareness that developmental variations and disabilities have an impact on developmental rates and patterns	Inform others about individual differences in development and learning and how such differences influence development	Share with others current research and theory on developmental variations associated with physical, cognitive, or emotional delays or challenges

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3. Individual Differences				
3.1 Respecting Personality Differences	Recognize that children have different personalities and behavioral styles, and respect these differences	Recognize that individual differences in temperament and personality have an impact on development and require different approaches from caregivers	Plan and implement learning experiences based on knowledge of child development and observations of individual children's particular skills, interests and abilities	Take responsibility for planning, implementing, assessing, and improving program practices that are responsive to individual differences in personality, interests, and abilities
4. Influences on Development				
4.1 Influences on Development	Recognize that development is affected by genetic and environmental (including biological and cultural) factors	Demonstrate awareness that biological, maturational, and environmental factors interact to influence development	Have knowledge of current theories and research on how biological and environmental factors are related to specific developmental delays, developmental disabilities, and risk factors	Analyze and use current knowledge of biological and environmental factors to inform others about the effects of biological and environmental factors on the development of children
4.2 Family as Primary Environment	Recognize that the family is the primary source of environmental influences on development	Recognize that early childhood professionals can provide support to families within the boundaries of best practices	Create environments and experiences that are sensitive to the values and goals of the child's family	Help inform others of current evidence-based research on practices that enhance the development and learning of young children from birth to kindergarten
4.3 Stress as Environmental Factor	Recognize that behavior and development are affected when children experience stressful environmental situations	Appreciate the fact that family stress and trauma have developmental consequences and that supportive relationships play a crucial role as children cope	Identify community resources and services for families and children under stress and make referrals when needed	Take responsibility for obtaining consultation services and securing collaborative agreements with community resources for families and children under stress
4.4 Variation in Cultural Practices	Demonstrate awareness that cultural practices vary from family-to-family	Describe teaching and learning strategies that are responsive to children's cultural and linguistic diversity	Create and maintain a culturally and linguistically responsive learning environment	Critically analyze current knowledge, theories, and best practice recommendations to support each child's development and learning while being responsive to diverse families and cultures

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5. Strategic Facilitation of Development				
5.1 Role of Relationships	Are aware of the importance of engaging in safe, secure, caring, and responsive relationships with each child to promote optimal development	Create an environment that can: • Nurture emotional well-being • Serve as a secure base for children • Respond to children's needs, abilities, and interests Facilitate initiative and self-reliant exploration, of learning materials and participation in curriculum experiences Use cooperative peer learning experiences (for children who are developmentally ready) Facilitate appropriate emotional expression and emotional intelligence (e.g., helping children develop social skills and empathy)	Model and help others develop competencies for nurturing relationships that enable children to be optimally ready for learning	Help inform others of current evidence-based research on practices that enhance the development and learning of young children from birth to kindergarten
5.2 Role of Experience	Know that young children learn through direct experiences	Offer a variety of learning experiences that: • Capitalize on children's natural curiosity and desire to acquire new skills that are challenging but not overly difficult • Are matched to the child's current skill levels that have been noted through observation, child's questions, misunderstandings, etc. • Apply theories of development and experiential learning to early childhood practices from birth to kindergarten	Demonstrate awareness of the causes of developmental change (facilitation, induction, maintenance) and that some behaviors cannot or should not be induced prior to the appropriate time for development due to biological, emotional, social, or cognitive reasons	Maintain and share with others knowledge of current theory and research on: • Strategies for facilitating optimal development • Finding an optimal match between theory and practical application

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5.3 Role of Play	Acknowledge that play provides the optimal mode for facilitating physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development by actively engaging the whole child	Describe appropriate time for playful activity versus time for adult-directed and controlled activity (e.g., safety procedures)	Articulate to parents and others why play is important to the development of young children, and assist them to understand, to provide suitable equipment and opportunities, and to support age-appropriate and different types of play that are important to development	Take responsibility for helping others organize and assess learning environments that facilitate development through a balance of child-centered play and adult-guided activities
5.4 Principles of Play	Know the importance of providing children with the time and materials to engage in playful activity	Know how to organize the physical and psychological environment to promote play, thereby, creating an environment that facilitates and enhances development	Plan and implement a variety of curricular activities that apply the principles of play in promoting development.	Advocate for excellence in programs serving young children from birth to kindergarten
5.5 Role of Adults in Play	Recognize that adults have an important role in facilitating development by engaging children in playful activities	Facilitate play by: • Setting the context (i.e., materials, time, space) • When appropriate, following the lead of the child • Supporting a playful attitude (e.g., make-believe, choice, flexible rules)	Plan and implement curriculum based on a balance of child-initiated and adult-guided experiences and on the interests of children and adults Infuse routines and required activities with an element of playfulness when possible	Provide opportunities for staff, family day care home assistants, and families to learn evidence-based best practices related to the use of playful modes of learning and how to play constructively with children
6. Collaboration				
6.1 Collaboration on Behalf of Children	Know how to follow guidelines for implementing IFSPs and IEPs as provided by supervisor or consultants	Collaborate with consultants and parents in planning learning experiences to meet children's individual needs and interests	Work with families, community members, and early childhood professionals to advocate policies that nurture the development of all children	Analyze and use current knowledge and theories about specific developmental delays, developmental disabilities, and risk factors to advocate on behalf of young children with developmental delays and disabilities
6.2 Collaboration with Adults	Know how to work with colleagues on behalf of young children	Collaborate with others (e.g., professionals, family members, business leaders) to share reflections on strategies for enhancing the learning environment	Collaborate with peers, families, community members, business leaders, and other professionals to promote optimal developmental outcomes	Apply the principles of human development and psychology that have implications for working with families, community members, business leaders, and other professionals to promote optimal developmental outcomes

Rationale:

Assessments of children, personnel, and programs are conducted through a variety of formal and informal procedures to document and evaluate growth and progress; to design instruction that is informed by children's developmental abilities; to make decisions about interventions, accommodations, and referrals; to identify teaching strategies that are best suited to facilitate development and curriculum; and to make decisions related to personnel and program effectiveness. Because assessment data guide decisions that affect individual children, staff members, and program plans, early childhood professionals must identify the purposes of assessment, use reliable and valid assessment procedures and instruments, and implement various methods of interpreting and sharing assessment data.

Knowledge:

1. Assessment and evaluation practices must be valid, reliable, and sensitive to the cultural and linguistic background of the child. They must also be appropriate for the developmental behavior being assessed.
   - These practices include observing children in natural situations and documenting observations through a variety of strategies that include anecdotal records and observational checklists; work samples such as drawings, writing samples or dictations; and photographs or videotapes of children's behaviors, creative constructions and playful activity throughout the day.
   - Families share information about their children's interests, activities, behaviors, developmental progress, health, and prior experiences.

2. Assessment procedures must be planned in accordance with up-to-date information on appropriate methods, sensitivity to individual and cultural differences, and with regard to the overall purpose of assessment.
   - Informal assessments and initial screenings are used to determine whether additional assessment and/or consultation are needed.
   - Formal standardized assessment data is used with informal assessment data to assist in screening and serving children who may need medical or educational interventions.
   - Observation, documentation, and assessment procedures are used to meet the unique needs of children.
   - Observational strategies are used to identify children's interests, abilities, and areas for growth.
   - Observations are documented in a variety of ways and used to modify the curriculum in response to observational data.

4. Two-way communication with families allows early childhood professionals to plan for and implement assessments, while families benefit from being informed of assessment results that will guide the child's growth and development.
   - The influences of family, environment, culture and language, and diverse ways of learning are recognized and used to present information in a positive, non-threatening, and constructive manner when interpreting assessment results.
   - Families are involved in the development and implementation of Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs).
   - A variety of professionals collaborate in the development and implementation of IFSPs and IEPs.
   - Observations are shared with families to celebrate growth and work collaboratively to address concerns and challenges.

5. Confidentiality of assessment results must be maintained in accordance with legal and ethical considerations.

Practices Based on Knowledge:

Grounded in knowledge and comprehension of typical and atypical child development, early childhood professionals in all types of settings must:

1. Plan assessment procedures that:
   - Use formal and informal methods to identify and document children's interests, strengths and challenges.
   - Employ assessment theories used for decision making and curriculum planning.
   - Implement assessment practices and interpret results with sensitivity to individual differences in children's ability levels as well as families' cultures, languages, and environmental factors.
   - Reflect the overall purpose of assessment and articulate the limits of norm-referenced standardized assessments.
2. Communicate with families to share assessment plans and information as well as to plan follow-up services and developmental learning experiences based on assessment.
3. Maintain confidentiality of assessment results in accordance with ethical and legal considerations, including the importance of avoiding negative labeling of children.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Early childhood professionals at ALL LEVELS have knowledge related to:	Professionals at Level I implement practices according to program guidelines and policies. They:	Professionals at Level II demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development. They:	Professionals at Level III demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills. They:	Professionals at Level IV demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities. They:
1. Assessment Plan and Procedures				
1.1 Assessment Planning	Follow instructions for implementing assessment plans by: • Maintaining records about occurrences (e.g., food intake, accidents, health indicators, interests, skills) • Collecting and filing work samples • Providing clear, accurate, and objective information about interactions with individual children to families and other professionals according to program policies and guidelines • Recording frequency and duration of specific child behaviors according to instructions	Identify sources of assessment data (e.g., naturalistic observations, anecdotal records, work samples, parental interviews) and plan a variety of methods to document behaviors and interests on a regular schedule	Create systematic plans and procedures for ongoing assessment of individual children using both formal and informal assessment procedures. This includes: • Selecting assessment tools that are valid, reliable, and sensitive to cultural and linguistic backgrounds of children • Creating a schedule for ongoing and periodic collection of assessment data • Planning how results will be used • Planning methods for communicating with families about assessment results	Plan, implement, and evaluate systems for ongoing assessment of individual children in all areas of development and behavior in order to identify: • Interests • Needs • Developmental progress • Possible need for diagnostic testing

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV

1.2 Assessment Procedures	Observe and gather other forms of information on children's:
	• Needs
	• Interests
	• Health status
	• Approaches to learning
	• Progress in developmental areas:
	  • Cognitive
	  • Social- emotional
	  • Physical
	  • Linguistic
		Use various methods for recording development on an ongoing basis to track progress of individual children. Examples include, but are not limited to:
		• Observation
		• Checklists
		• Rating scales
		• Work sampling
			Select and schedule procedures for screening for health and developmental progress using formal and/or informal procedures that:
			• Help measure progress toward curriculum goals
			• Are reliable and valid
			• Provide information that helps plan curriculum
			• Are sensitive to needs of English-language learners
			• Are sensitive to children with special needs
				Oversee the program's assessment procedures by planning, implementing, evaluating, and revising assessment programs with attention to:
				• Necessary staff training
				• Regular assessments
				• Sensitivity to cultural and linguistic backgrounds
				• Periodic screening for health status, and developmental milestones
				• Follow-up with norm-referenced assessment when indicated by screening
				• Adaptation of curriculum based on assessment data
				• Procedures for follow-up intervention, if needed

1.3 Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs)	Demonstrate awareness of the role of assessment data in writing IFSPs and IEPs	Use assessment data to construct IFSPs and IEPs	Integrate assessment data from a variety of sources to make decisions and to create IFSPs and IEPs	Oversee the program's use of assessment data to construct IFSPs and IEPs
1.4 Responsive Use of Assessment Data	Stay aware of actions needed to implement an IEP, IFSP, or, for developmentally advanced children, an individually designed enrichment program for any child identified as in need of tailored approaches	Design learning environment and plan activities based on assessed skills and behaviors of individual children	Identify relevant environmental risk factors that impact developmental progress and make referrals when appropriate for diagnostic testing and/or follow-up for special services	Provide support for program assistants and/or staff to facilitate: • Implementation of curricula based on assessed interests, skills and behaviors of individual children • Consultative services needed when making referrals for diagnostic testing or implementation of recommendations for individual children
1.5 Multidisciplinary Teams	Provide information about any child as needed and requested by a multidisciplinary assessment team	Participate as a member of a multidisciplinary assessment team when needed	Initiate request for multidisciplinary assessment as needed and participate as a team member when appropriate	Make arrangements for multidisciplinary assessment when needed

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2. Communication with Families				
2.1 Listening to and Learning from Families	Listen attentively to family members as they share observations of child behavior or skills and record the information to inform others of important considerations in planning activities	Use systematic procedures to obtain from family members pertinent information regarding child's interests, strengths, and challenges in order to plan the learning environment and curricular activities	Model for others and help others develop competency in using systematic procedures to obtain information from family members regarding child's developmental skills, interests, and needs	Involve families in devising systematic methods for family members and professionals to share observations and/or assessments of children's interests, behaviors, and abilities
2.2 Sharing Assessment Results	Share results of informal observations with family members regarding: • Achievement of new developmental milestones • Areas of concern or special strengths and opportunities • Child's interests	Use a variety of formal (e.g., conferences) and informal ways (e.g., conversation) to share assessment results with family members, keeping in mind that information must be shared in a way that is sensitive to family values and background	Share with families on a regular basis (two or three times a year): • Reports of child's progress in a way that is sensitive to family values, culture, and the language spoken in the home • Information about why and how the assessment was done and how the results will be used	Create policies and procedures to guide assistants and/or staff members in sharing assessment information with families

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3. Confidentiality				
3.1 Maintaining Confidentiality	Maintain confidentiality in regard to observations or records of each child's behavior and/or developmental progress	Share oral and written information with families and other professionals (within guidelines for confidentiality) in order to facilitate collaborative work on behalf of children	Model and help others understand guidelines and methods of maintaining confidentiality	Inform staff or assistants and families of confidentiality guidelines that include information on: • Who has access to children's assessment results • Laws and regulations regarding family members' right to gain access to files, with special attention to legal issues (e.g., to foster parents, non-custodial parents, or other designated care-givers) • What steps are taken to keep records confidential • How the assessment information will be used
3.2 Avoiding Negative Labeling	Avoid negative labeling when sharing assessment information When referring to a person with a disability, refer to the person first rather than the disability using "People-first" language (e.g., person with autism rather than autistic person)	Consistently use respectful language when referring to a person with a disability (i.e., refer to the person first rather than the disability and help others learn to use "People-first" language)	Share assessment information with family members and colleagues in a constructive manner that leads to planning that optimizes development	Nurture ability of assistants and/or staff members to avoid negative labeling when sharing assessment information with colleagues or family members and when making reference to any person with a disability

Rationale

Children develop in the context of families and communities that are characterized by diversity in family composition, languages spoken, environmental risks/resources, levels of ability, religious belief systems, and cultural practices. While families serve as the primary context for development, early care and education settings comprise a vital context that dramatically impacts development through the quality of care and education provided. Collaborative partnerships with the program's families and the community's resources are essential for creating and for maintaining environments in which children develop optimally in all areas of functioning. Moreover, communities that adequately support parenting as well as early education and care, thereby contributing to the quality of life for all citizens in the community, tend to grow and to develop socially and economically.

Knowledge

1. The family serves as the primary context for children's development.
   - Family members are a source of information regarding the family's goals and values, the child's previous experiences and current living situation, as well as observations of ongoing development.
   - Family members contribute greatly to their children's development when they are encouraged to communicate openly and honestly about issues, concerns, goals, and values.
   - Family members should be nurtured in their roles as advocates for their children's development and learning by being invited to serve on boards or councils that serve in an advisory capacity to the program.

2. Children develop in the context of families that differ according to structure, language, ethnicity, belief systems, and cultural practices.
   - Effective partnerships with family and community are characterized by mutual trust and respect for the values, attitudes, expectations, and cultures of other individuals, willingness to collaborate in problem-solving, and use of language that can be understood by all.
   - Children benefit when professionals understand and respect the family regardless of its composition, internal dynamics, religious beliefs, cultural practices, languages spoken, socioeconomic status, educational level, ability levels, and special interests or goals.
   - Practitioners know and use a variety of formal and informal communication strategies to establish and maintain positive reciprocal relationships with families, including at least rudimentary use of languages spoken in the homes.
   - Family diversity is reflected in materials and activities used in the learning environment.
   - Children's development is optimized when there is continuity between the home and the early education and care environment in terms of experiences and expectations.
   - Practitioners communicate frequently (daily, weekly, or monthly as appropriate to the situation) about specific experiences such as developmental milestones, changes in physical condition, interesting learning opportunities, and emotionally laden experiences so that both family members and early childhood practitioners are able to respond appropriately to the child's needs.
   - Practitioners collaborate with family members to solve developmental challenges by giving and receiving information, providing supportive follow-up to collaborative decisions, and by facilitating access to appropriate community resources.

3. Early education and care programs benefit from and contribute to the community at large through collaborative partnerships.

4. Families are best able to rear children when they are adequately prepared to serve as advocates for children.

Practices Based on Knowledge

Early childhood professionals in all types of settings that serve young children facilitate positive reciprocal relationships with families and communities. They:

1. Know and respect families that they serve.

2. Use various communication strategies to establish a working partnership with families (e.g., share information regarding the family in which the child lives, the child's experiences in care, and the child's developmental progress) and to involve family members actively in various components of the program.

3. Facilitate mutually beneficial linkages among families, agencies, businesses, organizations and other community resources.

4. Nurture the capacity of family members to serve as advocates for their own children and for children of the larger community.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Early childhood professionals at ALL LEVELS have knowledge related to:	Professionals at Level I implement practices according to program guidelines and policies. They:	Professionals at Level II demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development. They:	Professionals at Level III demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills. They:	Professionals at Level IV demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities. They:
1. Knowing and Respecting Families				
1.1 Mutual Respect	Demonstrate awareness of the role of family as the party having primary responsibility for decisions regarding goals and values for the child	Communicate with family members to become familiar with the family's circumstances, goals, values, and concerns	Incorporate family values and goals and concerns when planning curriculum and making decisions about the learning environment	Create program policies that are respectful of the needs and circumstances of all families
1.2 Respect for All Families	Demonstrate respect for all families regardless of composition, race, income, language, religion, special needs, and cultural practices	Use learning activities and communication strategies that are sensitive to all families	Design the learning environment so that curriculum activities, arrangement of physical spaces, selection of materials/equipment, assessment procedures, and scheduling are respectful of all families	Develop a system for monitoring and eliminating practices that are insensitive to family circumstances
1.3 Welcoming Environment	State the importance of creating a welcoming environment for all families	Create an environment that welcomes and responds to all families	Help other practitioners find ways to be welcoming and responsive to all families	Inform others of the importance of a welcoming and inclusive environment for all families
1.4 Positive Relationships	State the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships with families	Implement strategies for establishing and maintaining positive relationships with families	Plan activities in which members of various families form positive relationships with each other	Mentor assistants and/or staff members and colleagues in developing skills that promote positive relationships with families

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2. Communication				
2.1 Listening to Families	Listen to family members' expressions of values, goals, interests, and concerns in conversations	Use various methods to learn about families' goals, values, interests, and concerns	Create and implement formal and informal opportunities for communicating with families to learn about specific needs or concerns regarding the child	Design systematic mechanisms for assessing the program's responsiveness to family values, goals, interests, and concerns
2.2 Involving Families	Ask families about special interests of the child that may help plan daily activities in the setting Welcome family members as visitors to the program	Invite families to observe and/or participate in daily activities and to assist in planning future activities	Model for others and help others develop and refine skills for involving families in daily activities, long range plans, and policy decisions	Ensure that family members are involved in program-wide activities and opportunities that are sensitive to schedules, values, and cultural practices of family members
2.3 Communicating Regarding Child's Activities	Communicate with family members daily to: • Learn from family members about child's activities, interests, special needs, new skills observed at home, upcoming events, and other activities that impact the child's life • Share information about program activities, achievement of new developmental skills, food intake, guidance issues, or activities of special interest	Adapt plans and routines in response to information learned from families	Model for others and assist others to develop skills for communicating with families regarding the child's activities	Design systems for staff and families to exchange information on daily routines, upcoming events, and children's responses to activities
2.4 Communicating Regarding Child's Progress	Exchange information about current activities, concerns, and accomplishments on a daily basis	Communicate child's developmental progress with sensitivity to parental values/goals and reactions	Communicate formally and informally, to share and to receive information on child's developmental progress and to set goals for further development	Develop program policies for early childhood professionals and family members to share information regarding children's developmental progress

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2.5 Communicating Regarding Atypical Development or Special Needs	Observe and record children's development and share relevant information with supervisor Avoid the use of negative labels when sharing information about an individual with a disability (i.e., refer to the person rather than the disability)	Communicate with families, in a sensitive and confidential manner, regarding possible developmental challenges, suggest follow-up, and provide information on resources to address the need Avoid the use of negative labeling when referring to a person with a disability	Model skills and encourage others to communicate with families, in a sensitive and confidential manner, regarding possible developmental challenges, suggest follow-up, and provide information on resources to address the need	Support other professionals in acquiring skills needed to communicate effectively with families regarding suspected delays or special needs
2.6 Communicating in Ways Families Can Understand	Recognize the importance of using some of the family's preferred language when possible Find ways to communicate via facial expressions, voice tone, friendly gestures, etc. Recognize that there may be a need for translation assistance	Makes an effort to use, at least at the rudimentary level, the language spoken in the home Arrange for translation when needed	Structure the learning environment to incorporate some elements of languages spoken in family homes	Mentor other professionals in using language that is responsive to family preferences
2.7 Maintaining Confidentiality	Maintain confidentiality for children and family members in regard to: • Specific information about family circumstances • Assessment of child's progress	Share information with families about circumstances under which information will be shared with other agencies Inform family members about: • Who can gain access to the records kept by the program • What procedures are used to protect records from unauthorized use	Model and help others develop skills for preserving confidentiality of information about child's behaviors and results of developmental assessments	Establish policies for implementing, maintaining, and monitoring confidential information and share this information with assistants/staff and family members
2.8 Recognizing Symptoms of Stress	Recognize signs of family stress	Listen to family members' reports of stressful circumstances and organize the learning environment to be responsive to children's needs during times of unusual stress	Provide information to family members about stress management and relevant community resources	Provide support to other professionals (i.e., assistants, staff members, or colleagues) regarding ways to be responsive to families experiencing stress
2.9 Nurturing Families in Rearing Children	Assist family members to find reliable sources of childrearing information	Share information from reliable sources on childrearing topics	Arrange formal and informal opportunities for discussion of childrearing topics	Critically review childrearing literature and resources, and select relevant topics and appropriate materials to share with families

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2.10 Arranging Opportunities for Collaboration and Support	Use various types of methods for exchanging information and offering support	Plan and implement a variety of opportunities for families to exchange information	Plan, implement, and evaluate various strategies for exchanging information	Ensure that program assistants/staff arrange opportunities for families and staff to exchange information and to provide support for each other
2.11 Involving Families in Policy Decisions	Clearly communicate policies to family members and listen when they share reactions to policy decisions	Invite family members to comment on policies and be responsive to families' perspectives to the extent possible within program goals	Model for others and help others develop skills in involving families in policy decisions	Provide leadership in developing opportunities for families' perspectives to be represented in program policy decisions

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3. Collaborative Community Partnerships				
3.1 Facilitating Education and Awareness of Community Resources	Introduce community resources to the children	Plan for activities that include community resources	Design curricular activities that create an awareness among children of various basic community resources (e.g., police, fire, medical)	Ensure that assistants/staff, children, and family members are aware of community resources
3.2 Facilitating Linkages Between Families and Community Resources	Can locate a listing of community resources	Share information with families regarding community resources	Refer a family to a community resource for assistance and seek out community resources (when appropriate)	Create and maintain a list of current community resources and make the list available to practitioners and families
3.3 Facilitating Access to Community Resources	Demonstrate awareness of the importance of helping families locate community resources	Compile and share information with families regarding access to community resources, and help families make the initial contact with community organizations or agencies	Use knowledge of and access to community resources to enrich the curriculum and children's learning experiences	Promote collaboration among agencies that serve families
3.4 Agreements with Community Agencies, Organizations, and Businesses	Demonstrate awareness of agreements with community agencies, organizations, and businesses	Communicate with representatives from various community organi-zations, agencies, and businesses regarding needed services and procedures for gaining access to services	Share with others information related to agreements with community organizations, agencies and businesses	Establish formal and informal agreements with community organi-zations and agencies that serve families
3.5 Participating as Citizen in Community-at-Large	Participate in community events occasionally to become familiar with historical and cultural aspects of the community and to create an awareness among community members of the role of early childhood professionals	Participate frequently in community activities and actively inform others of the needs of children and families in the community	Arrange opportunities for children to observe or participate in community events Participate in planning community events that welcome all children and families Initiate public awareness about the needs of children and families and about the impact of social and economic development on the well-being of children and families	Collaborate with artistic, historical, and other cultural community resources to further the goals of the local community Take an active role as a community citizen by serving in various capacities (e.g., board member, advisory council of local government, civic organizations) to sensitize the community to the needs of children and families and to the importance of promoting children's optimum development in order to strengthen the community

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
4. Nurturing Families as Advocates				
4.1 Transitions	Interact with families regularly about routine transitions (daily arrival and departure) and anticipated major transitions (e.g., classroom changes, preschool to kindergarten)	Share information with families about programs and services that might be helpful to families during transitions	Model and help others develop skills for nurturing families to navigate daily and major transitions	Oversee program's strategies for collaborating with families as primary decision makers for their children and with other programs or schools to facilitate transitions
4.2 Service Acquisition	Demonstrate awareness of community services that can benefit children and families, and share that information as needed	Nurture family members in their ability to negotiate services on behalf of their children	Nurture families' abilities to make primary decisions about services or special accommodations needed for the children	Oversee program's strategies, for building family members' skills and confidence regarding access to community services
4.3 Consent to Share Information	Follow guidelines for obtaining family consent before sharing information with other agencies/organizations	Follow guidelines for obtaining family consent before sharing information with other agencies/organizations and share these guidelines with assistants/staff and family members	Plan and implement procedures for obtaining family consent before sharing information with other agencies/organizations	Oversee procedures for obtaining consent from families before sharing information with other agencies/organizations

Rationale

Physical and psychological components of the learning environment dramatically affect children's cognitive, social, and emotional development during the critical years of childhood when attitudes toward self, others, and future learning are maximally impacted. Research-based knowledge of child development, effective learning strategies, and content guides professionals in planning an integrated curriculum, selecting materials and equipment, planning schedules, and arranging space to create a learning environment that nurtures all areas of development. Curriculum is a key component of the learning environment and includes but is not limited to the arts, literacy, mathematics, physical education, health, social studies, and science. The learning environment is optimally effective when it is designed to foster learning through exploration, play, and appropriately challenging experiences in a context that respects diversity in backgrounds, family structure, and special developmental needs of children.

Knowledge:

Building on an understanding of how children grow and develop, early childhood practitioners design, implement, and monitor the learning environment to support all areas of development. They:

1. Understand that physical and psychological components of an effective learning environment must be carefully planned, implemented, monitored, and revised on an ongoing basis in order to serve stakeholders in the program (i.e., children, families, practitioners, and the community-at-large) and that effective communication is essential in building respectful relationships among learners, families, and colleagues.

2. Understand that learning and development is optimized in a nurturing environment that offers opportunities for exploration, play, and challenging experiences that are appropriately matched to the current level of development, interests, and backgrounds of learners.

3. Understand that curriculum planning for content areas such as, but not limited to Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Language and Literacy, Cognition and General Knowledge, Fine Arts, and Physical Development and Health must be guided by knowledge of content, knowledge of children's individual needs, and knowledge of effective strategies for facilitating further development.

4. Understand that schedule planning is important in order to use time effectively and to achieve a balance between active and quiet as well as indoor and outdoor experiences, and individual as well as group activities (when age appropriate).

5. Understand that, in addition to health, safety, and comfort, the physical environment must be arranged carefully to meet children's developmental needs for movement and rest, for activity and quiet, and for indoor and outdoor learning experiences, as well as for nurturing autonomy.

6. Understand that materials and equipment must be selected carefully to ensure health and safety as well as to provide experiences that are appropriate for a variety of developmental levels, individual interests, and cultural backgrounds.

7. Understand that children are influenced by multiple contexts, and that the child care environment serves children best when goals, plans, and changes in the environment are designed in collaboration with families and community stakeholders.

Practices Based on Knowledge:

Early childhood professionals, regardless of the type of setting (schools, family child care, centers, private schools), plan, arrange, implement, and evaluate the physical and psychological (cognitive, social, affective) aspects of the learning environments that support physical, cognitive, linguistic and social development, as well as emotional well-being in children with a broad range of developmental levels, special needs, individual interests, and cultural backgrounds. They:

1. Facilitate development in all domains by planning, implementing, monitoring, and revising learning environments that are responsive and that:
   - Are safe, comfortable, challenging, and welcoming to children and their families;
   - Support curriculum goals (skills, concepts, attitudes, and dispositions) in areas such as literacy, mathematics, appreciation of the arts, science, and language by planning activities that capitalize on curiosity, exploration, and play with objects, materials, and artifacts of nature that promote learning about the physical world;
   - Integrate curricular areas in ways that are culturally sensitive, intellectually stimulating, and responsive to children's interests, developmental abilities, and special needs.

2. Create a nurturing environment and utilize learning strategies that stimulate curiosity, encourage participation in exploration and play, and challenge learners to master new skills.

3. Plan curriculum experiences that facilitate the program goals and provide opportunities to acquire concepts and skills that are precursors to academic content taught in elementary school. The curriculum is based upon a philosophical framework that is congruent with the program goals and that stimulates gradual and continuous development in these domains:
   - Social and Emotional Development (includes Relationships with Others, Learning about Self, Expression of Feelings and Self-Regulation)
   - Approaches to Learning (includes Persistence, Initiative and Curiosity, Creativity and Inventiveness, and Reasoning and Problem Solving)
   - Language and Literacy (includes Listening and Speaking, Phonological Awareness and Alphabetic Knowledge, Print Awareness and Concepts, Comprehension, and Early Writing)
   - Cognition and General Knowledge (includes Learning about Mathematical Concepts, Learning about the World, and Learning about Families and Communities)
   - Fine Arts (includes Dance, Music, Theatre, Visual and Performing Arts, and Crafts)
   - Physical Development and Health (includes Gross Motor Development, Fine Motor Development, and Health and Well-Being)

4. Organize the schedule so that routines are both predictable and flexible, with extended periods of time for uninterrupted exploration, play, and project development.

5. Arrange and monitor the physical environment to provide an aesthetically pleasing space, maintain safety, promote health, support the curriculum, and utilize up-to-date information on environmental impacts on health and learning.

6. Select materials/equipment, arrange physical space, and plan schedules/routines to stimulate and nurture development in all curricular content areas by selecting and making available:
   - A wide variety of safe, clean, challenging, and stimulating materials and equipment that foster curiosity, exploration, play, critical thinking, and problem solving skills.
   - A wide variety of materials and activities that reflect respect for the dignity of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, social class, family composition, geographic origin, or cultural background.
   - A wide variety of experiences, materials/equipment, and teaching strategies to accommodate a broad range of individual differences in prior experience, maturation rates, learning styles, special needs, cultural practices, and interests.

7. Collaborate with families, colleagues, and members of the broader community to construct learning environments that promote a spirit of unity, respect, and service in the interest of the common good.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Early childhood professionals at ALL LEVELS have knowledge related to:	Professionals at Level I implement practices according to program guidelines and policies. They:	Professionals at Level II demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development. They:	Professionals at Level III demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills. They:	Professionals at Level IV demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities. They:
1. Overall Learning Environment				
1.1 Components of Learning Environment	Demonstrate an awareness that physical and psychological components of the learning environment have dramatic effects on all areas of development, including: • Learning • Social competence • Autonomy and responsibility • Motor skills • Emotional well-being	Create indoor and outdoor environments that support and integrate all developmental domains	Model and help others create indoor and outdoor environments that support and integrate all developmental domains	Stay informed of current theory and research on integrated curriculum in early childhood learning environments and share that knowledge with others
1.2 Appropriate and Responsive Teaching	Follow program guidelines that create an appropriate and responsive learning environment. They: • Interact positively with children • Encourage children to participate in activities • Provide social and emotional support for children to feel comfortable and safe	Use knowledge of the effects of various components of the learning environment to plan activities, set behavioral guidelines, organize the physical environment, and plan schedules that are appropriate for: • Individual levels of development • Specific needs • Interests • Cultural backgrounds	Model strategies for and help others understand methods for creating appropriate learning environments that are responsive to needs of children	Develop systematic plans for creating, implementing, assessing, and modifying learning environments that are safe, appropriate for the developmental levels of the children, and responsive to the children, families, and community

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
1.3 Continuity of Care	Provide continuity of care (i.e., same caregiver with child) over an extended period, when providing care for children from birth to three in order to nurture secure attachment relationships and emotional well-being	Provide continuity of care for children from birth to three and articulate to family members the importance of continuity	Help others understand the importance of continuity of care for infants and toddlers from birth to three	Ensure continuity of care when working with infants and toddlers from birth to three
2. Learning Strategies				
2.1 Effective Learning Strategies	Use a variety of learning strategies, including : • Play • Small group projects • Open-ended questioning • Conversation • Problem solving • Cooperative learning • Methods of inquiry	Demonstrate skills for: • Storytelling • Implementing music and art experiences • Planning and conducting field trips • Leading group activities for children who are developmentally ready	Model and help others acquire skills in a variety of teaching and learning strategies	Encourage assistants, colleagues and other staff members to practice effective teaching and learning strategies by sharing up-to-date information on best practices derived from evidence-based research
2.2 Encouraging Participation	Recognize the importance of encouraging children to participate in a variety of activities while remaining sensitive to individual preferences and choices	Actively encourage children to participate in activities, while also demonstrating sensitivity to children's preferences and choices about whether to participate and to what extent the participation will be (i.e., honoring children's desire to not participate in every activity)	Model various strategies for encouraging children to participate in activities while honoring preferences and choice	Plan, implement, assess, and modify practices to nurture skills for sensitive encouragement of participation
2.3 Facilitating Curiosity, Exploration, and Play	Support child-centered curiosity, exploration and play as primary learning strategies	Use a variety of strategies to create experiences that stimulate curiosity, exploration, and play that is appropriate to the child's age and ability level	Model and nurture others' skills in creating experiences that stimulate curiosity, exploration, and play that is appropriate to the child's age and ability level	Stay informed of, and share with others, current research and theory regarding strategic facilitation of curiosity, exploration, play, and creative expression
2.4 Articulating the Rationale for Play-based Learning Strategies	Describe how curiosity, exploration, and play contribute to all domains of development	Articulate to family members and others how curiosity, exploration, and play facilitate learning and development	Model and help others acquire skills for explaining how curiosity, exploration, and play facilitate learning and development	Help families and other community members and organizations to appreciate the important role of curiosity, exploration, and play in children's development, and advocate for support of play environments (e.g., playgrounds and museums)

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2.5 Creating a Context that Supports Curiosity, Exploration, and Play	Follow guidelines for creating the physical and psychological context for curiosity, exploration, and play behaviors related to these areas of development: • Physical and motor skills • Cognitive development • Social engagement • Emotional expression • Linguistic development	Structure the environment to provide a supportive context for exploration and play through such strategies as: • Mutually engaging interaction • Reciprocal exchange of actions/words • Turn-taking	Model proficiency in and help others to develop skills in creating environments for optimal facilitation of learning and development through curiosity, exploration, and play	Plan for continuous improvement of program environment in order to facilitate curiosity, exploration and play
2.6 Sequential Patterns of Development in Exploration and Play	Recognize that children exhibit different types of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional behaviors in terms of their individual development	Describe the changes in play behaviors that typically occur as development proceeds	Help others understand the developmental progression of exploration and play behaviors that characterize children with typical development	Stay informed of current trends in research and theory related to the development of exploration and play and share this information with others
2.7 Adapting Learning Environments to Support Learners with Atypical Developmental Patterns	Follow instructions to modify the learning environment to support curiosity, exploration, and play among children with atypical patterns of development	Adapt the learning environment to support curiosity, exploration, and play among children with atypical patterns of development	Model and help others learn ways to adapt the environment to provide optimal support for curiosity, exploration, and play among children with atypical patterns of development	Plan, carry-out, evaluate, and modify environmental factors that provide adaptive support for curiosity, exploration, and play among learners with atypical development

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3. Curriculum				
3.1 Curriculum Philosophy	Describe basic ideas that guide curriculum development	Articulate how philosophical ideas affect curriculum	Have a written philosophical statement that guides curriculum development and help others develop a philosophical statement	Provide leadership for developing curriculum philosophy
3.2 Curriculum Framework	Use a curriculum framework to implement activities that: • Nurture all domains of development • Are responsive to families • Are responsive to needs of learners of diverse ability levels	Use assessment of children's progress to adapt curriculum to nurture gradual and continuous acquisition and integration of new skills among learners	Model and helps others improve skills in adapting curriculum to nurture gradual and continuous acquisition and integration of skills among learners	Provide leadership for curriculum development and implementation
3.3 Social and Emotional Development	Use attentive, responsive methods to help children acquire skills in: • Developing appropriate and positive relationships with others of various ages across the lifespan • Learning about the "self" (e.g., how to manage or regulate one's behavior) • Learning to both express feelings and to inhibit unacceptable behaviors when also asserting one's independence	Use a variety of attentive, responsive methods to facilitate children's social-emotional skills, and plan experiences, based on assessment of child's progress, to facilitate gradual and continuous mastery of these skills Create opportunities for children to engage in caring behaviors for other living things (e.g., people of all ages, domesticated animals, wildlife, plants)	Model and help others acquire proficient skills to facilitate children's social-emotional skills Model and assist others in mastering the planning of social-emotional growth experiences for children, based on the child's progress	Facilitate continuous improvement of social-emotional curriculum using best practices derived from evidenced-based research
3.4 Approaches to Learning	Provide opportunities for children to develop: • Persistence • Initiative and curiosity • Creativity and inventiveness • Reasoning and problem Solving	Use a variety of research-based strategies to facilitate children's adaptive approaches to learning	Model and help others to acquire proficient skills in nurturing children's adaptive approaches in learning	Facilitate continuous improvement of curriculum goals that facilitate adaptive approaches to learning among young children

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3.5 Language and Literacy	Provide opportunities through such activities as conversation, field trips, books, and expressive arts, for children to acquire skills in: • Listening and speaking • Phonological awareness and alphabetic knowledge • Print awareness and concepts • Comprehension • Early writing	Have a wide range of skills for promoting language and literacy that are sensitive to the language spoken in the child's home and that meet the needs of individual learners	Model skills that promote language and literacy development Use assessment data to create learning opportunities that are adapted to the developmental level and learning abilities of individual learners	Facilitate continuous program improvement in language and literacy curriculum
3.6 Learning about Mathematical Concepts	Provide opportunities for children to explore and play with activities related to: • Numbers and operations • Measurement • Patterns and relationships • Shapes • Spatial sense • Data collection and analysis • Time and sequence	Have a wide range of skills for: • Planning and facilitating play-based mathematics activities that are developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and adapted for children with special needs • Integrating with other curriculum content areas and across domains • Using observations, work samples, or other assessment tools to plan experiences that facilitate gradual and continuous development of mathematics concepts	Model and help others: • Plan and facilitate playful curriculum activities that are developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and adapted for children with special needs • Integrate mathematics curriculum with other content areas and across domains • Use assessment of child's progress to plan curriculum experiences that are matched to individual needs, interests, and ability levels	Facilitate continuous improvement for mathematics curriculum goals and activities that are appropriate, culturally responsive, and adapted for children with special needs
3.7 Learning about the World (Scientific Knowledge and Scientific Inquiry and Exploration)	Provide opportunities for exploration, experimentation, play, and creative expression related to cognitive understanding of the world in content areas that include, but are not limited to: • Scientific Knowledge (e.g., living things, weather, life cycles) • Scientific Inquiry and Exploration (e.g., asking questions, suggesting explanations, collecting and describing information)	Have a wide range of skills for: planning and facilitating play-based science activities that are: • Appropriate to the child's age and stage • Culturally responsive • Adapted for children with special needs • Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains • Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations • Facilitate gradual and continuous development of scientific concepts	Model and help others develop a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating play-based science activities that are: • Appropriate to the child's age and stage • Culturally responsive • Adapted for children with special needs • Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains • Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations • Facilitate gradual and continuous development of scientific concepts	Facilitate continuous program improvement by using up-to-date evidence-based research on best practices for planning and implementing science curriculum

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3.8 Learning about Families and Communities	Provide opportunities for children to learn basic concepts and skills that lay the foundations for concepts taught in the school-age years (geography, economics, history, government) in ways appropriate for the child's age and skill levels. Examples: • Sense of oneself as a member of social groups such as the family, early childhood program, or religious group • Similarities and differences among people • Physical characteristics of the locality, a pre-cursor to geography (e.g., mountains, water) • Effects on environment (e.g., recycling, pollution) • Community social roles (letter carrier, teacher, religious leader, mechanic) • Resource exchange, a precursor to economics (e.g., play store, sell and trade things) • Stories, dramas, and artifacts that convey history • Participation in social groups (e.g., make and obey rules for group) and citizenship	Have a wide range of skills for: planning and facilitating play-based social studies activities that are: • Appropriate to the child's age and stage • Culturally responsive • Adapted for children with special needs • Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains • Based on assessment tools such as work samples or observations • Facilitate gradual and continuous development of precursors to social studies concepts taught in elementary school	Model and help others develop a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating play-based social studies activities that are: • Appropriate to the child's age and stage • Culturally responsive • Adapted for children with special needs • Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains • Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations • Facilitate gradual and continuous development of precursors to social studies concepts taught in elementary school Provide opportunities for children to develop cognitive skills that are precursors to social studies content, including: • History • Geography • Economics • Families and Communities	Facilitate continuous program improvement for planning and implementing families and communities (social studies) curriculum based on best practices derived from evidence-based research

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3.9 Fine Arts	Provide opportunities for exploration, play, and expression in areas such as: • Dance • Music (vocal and instrumental) • Theatre arts (e.g., word play, pretense, dramatic play) • Visual arts (e.g., drawing, cutting, pasting, sculpting, painting) Provide opportunities for seeing and using various open-ended expressive media such as art, music, poetry, dance, and drama that: • Are appropriate to the child's age and skill level • Represent a broad range of cultures • Are responsive to families' goals and values • Result from playful engagement with expressive materials • Expose children to artistic products that have been recognized as significant by various cultures • Do not focus on copying or replicating work of others	Have a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating play-based fine arts activities that are: • Appropriate to the child's age and stage • Culturally responsive • Adapted for children with special needs • Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains • Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations • Designed to facilitate gradual and continuous development of fine arts skills that set the precedent for life long engagement in the fine arts	Model and help others develop a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating fine arts activities that are: • Appropriate to the child's age and stage • Culturally responsive • Adapted for children with special needs • Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains • Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations • Designed to facilitate gradual and continuous development of fine arts skills that set the precedent for life long engagement in the fine arts	Facilitate continuous program improvement in the fine arts curriculum based on best practices derived from up-to-date evidence-based research

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3.10 Physical Development and Health	Offer play-based physical and motor activities that foster skills in the areas of: • Gross motor development • Fine motor development • Health and well-being (including nutrition and self-care practices) Provide regular opportunities for children to use health and safety practices such as these: • Eating nutritious foods • Resting • Relaxing • Exercising • Washing hands • Brushing teeth • Preventing accidents • Practicing safety rules • Preventing harm to one's body • Getting routine medical care Provide opportunities for children to learn about, ask questions, and use stories and play-based activities to reduce anxiety about medical concepts (e.g., immunizations, dentist, hospital)	Have a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating play-based physical and motor activities that are: • Appropriate to the child's age and stage • Culturally responsive • Adapted for children with special needs • Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains • Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations • Designed to facilitate gradual and continuous development of physical and motor skills	Model and help others develop a wide range of skills for planning and facilitating play-based physical and motor activities that are: • Appropriate to the child's age and stage • Culturally responsive • Adapted for children with special needs • Integrated with other curriculum content areas and across domains • Based on assessment tools such as work samples, or observations • Designed to facilitate gradual and continuous development of physical and motor skills	Provide leadership for planning and implementing physical and motor curriculum based on best practices derived from up-to-date evidence-based research

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
4. Schedules, Routines, and Transitions				
4.1 Predictable and Flexible Schedules and Transitions	Demonstrate awareness of importance of implementing both predictable and flexible schedules, routines, and transitions that are appropriate to children's developmental levels	Plan and implement predictable and flexible schedules, routines, and transitions appropriate to children's developmental levels	Model for others and encourage others to develop proficiency in the implementation of predictable and flexible schedules, routines, and transitions appropriate to children's developmental levels	Provide leadership for planning, implementing, and assessing routines, and transitions, and implementing changes when appropriate
4.2 Balanced Schedules	Follow plans that promote learning and creative expression through: • Indoor and outdoor activities • Active and quiet activities • Group (if age appropriate) and individual experiences	Create and implement plans that include indoor and outdoor experiences, active and quiet activities, and individual as well as group (if age/stage appropriate) opportunities for learning and creative expressions	Model for others and encourage others to develop proficiency in the creation and implementation of varied and balanced schedules	Supervise, assess, and inform others of current information to support continuous improvement in scheduling and planning variation and balance in activities

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5. Physical Environment				
5.1 Environments that Nurture Development	With supervision, can organize, assess and modify the indoor and outdoor physical environment to ensure the presence of these essential components: • Safety • Comfort • Aesthetically pleasing learning conditions • Healthy space for free play • Supervision at all times • Available quiet space for individual children as needed	Organize, assess, and modify the indoor and outdoor physical environment on an ongoing basis to meet the criteria for safety, comfort, and aesthetically pleasing learning conditions	Model and help others develop skills to organize, assess and modify the indoor and outdoor physical environment to ensure safety, comfort, and aesthetically pleasing learning conditions	Supervise and provide support to others as they organize the indoor and outdoor environment to promote safety, comfort, and aesthetically pleasing learning conditions and implements changes if deficiencies are identified
5.2 Monitoring Physical Environment	With supervision, monitor the physical environment to ensure it: • Is safe • Has non-obstructed pathways • Permits unobstructed view of all children at all times • Supports a variety of activities to meet diverse levels of development • Nurtures decision-making, autonomy, and creativity • Facilitates access to materials and activities • Provides storage for personal belongings • Minimizes interruptions • Allows active and quiet activities • Supports individual and group activities	Independently monitor physical environment for the criteria listed at the previous level and make appropriate modifications as needed	Model and help others develop skills to ensure that the physical environment is optimally arranged to support development	Provide leadership for monitoring physical aspects of the environment to ensure safety and to support program goals and objectives

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5.3 Current Trends in Environmental Design	Participate in professional development opportunities to learn of current trends in designing the learning environment	Implement changes in physical environments based on current information related to environmental design	Model for others and share information with others on implementing current trends in creating optimal physical environments for young children, with particular attention to stress reduction through managing acoustic properties for noise abatement and increasing space or otherwise reducing crowding	Stay informed of current research and theory that has implications for design of the indoor and outdoor learning environment, and share the information with others
6. Materials And Equipment				
6.1 Materials Appropriate to Age and Ability	Use safe, clean, and appropriately challenging materials that foster curiosity, exploration, play, critical thinking, and problem solving skills	Select, create and use materials and equipment that foster curiosity, exploration, play, critical thinking, and problem solving skills Encourage children to find or bring materials, screened for safety and appropriateness, and then explore their possible uses	Create designs for materials and equipment that foster curiosity, exploration, play, critical thinking, and problem solving skills and help others develop skills for creating appropriate materials	Supervise and provide support to others for the selection and creation of materials and equipment that foster curiosity, exploration, play, critical thinking, and problem solving skills and promote continuous improvement in this area
6.2 Culturally Responsive Materials and Equipment	Use learning materials and equipment that respect diversity in developmental abilities, family composition, and cultural backgrounds	Plan and implement learning experiences that involve materials and equipment that are respectful of all people	Model the design and use of materials and equipment that reflect cultural diversity and articulate to others why this is important	Provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and continuously improving the selection and use of materials/equipment that encourage respectful relationships among all people
6.3 Variety in Materials and Equipment	Rotate learning materials and equipment that are available to provide variety in children's experiences and to stimulate new interests	Plan and implement learning experiences which offer a broad range of experiences with materials and equipment	Model the practice of rotating materials in order to challenge learners to acquire new interests and skills	Provide leadership that encourages others to provide materials/equipment on a rotating basis

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
7. Collaboration				
7.1 Collaborating with Peers to Improve Learning Environment	Recognize that collaboration with other professionals provides a valuable opportunity to learn strategies for enhancing the learning environment	Participate in various ways (e.g., professional meetings, training programs, e-mail listserv discussions, etc.) in collaborating with colleagues to share ideas for enhancing the learning environment	Actively collaborate with colleagues to create ways (e.g., projects, sharing action research, etc.) to enhance the physical and psycho-logical aspects of the learning environment	Support collaborative activities of staff members and provide leadership and time for providers to establish and maintain additional collaborative opportunities designed to enhance skills in improving physical and psychological aspects of the learning environment
7.2 Collaborating with Community to Improve Learning Environment	Recognize the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships with family members, colleagues, businesses, and the larger community to develop an effective learning environment	Practice verbal and non-verbal communication skills needed to establish positive working relationships with others	Model a variety of strategies to achieve positive working relationships with family members, colleagues, businesses, and members of the larger community to optimize the learning environment	Take leadership in establishing positive relationships with family members, colleagues, businesses, and the larger community and promote continuous improvement to optimize learning

Rationale:

Relationships between caring adults and children and among children themselves create the context for healthy social and emotional development. Because children's relationships with others are based in large measure on their prior experiences, early childhood professionals, regardless of the type of setting in which they practice, must understand the principles and practices that promote an environment that is psychologically safe and secure and that encourages prosocial behavior, conflict resolution, problem solving, and a sense of community for children and their families.

Knowledge:

1. Developmental stages serve as a guide to understanding children's behavior and interactions with others.
   - Successful attachments serve as the foundation for healthy emotional development with other people.
   - Children develop a positive sense of themselves and their abilities as they interact in physically and emotionally safe environments that are responsive to their unique individual needs, abilities, and temperaments.
   - Children develop successful relationships with their peers as they have opportunities to interact with others of similar and different ages.
   - Children's interaction styles reflect their families of origin, cultures, linguistic diversity, and unique abilities and disabilities.
   - Theories of social and emotional development, interactions and group dynamics as well as current research related to development, learning, and practice guide the decisions and actions of early childhood practitioners.

2. Positive and nurturing relationships support and enhance healthy development and foster successful interactions with peers and with persons at various ages across the lifespan.
   - Adult actions toward children reflect an understanding of each child's value and worth and demonstrate unconditional positive regard, regardless of gender, temperament, abilities/disabilities, culture, language, race, or home background.
   - Healthy relationships and interactions occur in environments that are physically and psychologically safe for children and their families.

3. Communication with children is based on an understanding of the development sequences of language acquisition, expression, and reception.
   - Children's competence in communication reflects their unique abilities as they are expressed within their homes.
   - Children communicate with others linguistically as well as non-linguistically using gestures and signs, adaptive devices, and facial expressions.

4. Children develop competence in managing their own behaviors and solving conflicts with one another by observing and interacting with caring adults who:
   - Provide appropriate opportunities for children to become independent by making choices about things that affect them.
   - Engage in conversations.
   - Provide support in redirecting and solving social conflicts.
   - Support children to learn and practice appropriate and acceptable behaviors as individuals and as members of a community.
   - Provide daily schedules, routines, and activities that are responsive to the developmental needs and interests of the children as well as responsive to the unique interests and abilities of individual children.
   - Assist children to identify and express their feelings in ways that are culturally and socially acceptable.
   - Provide structure and support for resolving conflicts as they occur in ways that reflect an understanding of children's developmental abilities.

- Understand that challenging behaviors may reflect a variety of contributing factors such as challenges associated with particular developmental stages as well as environmental conditions that are not responsive to children's age/stage of development (e.g., sitting still or waiting in line too long), emotional stress, disabling conditions that impact a child's ability to adapt, or by not having been taught the behaviors associated with being a member of the learning community.

5. As children develop socially, they must learn the skills needed to participate as a member of a group; professionals must understand developmental changes related to being able to enter a group and play an active contributing role.

6. Families are active participants in guiding children's behavior.
   - Families hold values, ideas and expectations and they employ various interaction styles that reflect a variety of values, cultures, and belief systems.
   - Families and early childhood practitioners can work cooperatively to support and address the behavior of children at school through their respectful interactions with each other and with other professionals who serve as resources.

Practices Based on Knowledge:

Building on an understanding of how children grow and develop, early childhood professionals in all types of programs serving young children establish positive relationships with children and their families. They:

1. Create positive and nurturing relationships with each child based on respect, trust, calm approaches, respect for diversity and acceptance of individual differences in ability levels, temperament, and other characteristics.

2. Provide a variety of opportunities to communicate verbally and non-verbally in playful engagements with people of a variety of ages across the lifespan.

3. Use various forms of verbal and nonverbal communication frequently with children, and respond to children as individuals as well as to the group as a whole.

4. Use guidance practices that are respectful, meet the emotional needs of individual children, clearly communicate expectations for appropriate behavior, promote prosocial behaviors, prevent and minimize behavioral problems through careful planning of the learning environment, teach conflict resolution strategies, and manage challenging behaviors.

5. Use knowledge of group processes and developmental aspects of group behavior to guide the complex challenges required to guide groups of children.

6. Build positive partnerships with children's families with regard to managing behavior and nurturing development.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Early childhood professionals at ALL LEVELS have knowledge related to:	Professionals at Level I implement practices according to program guidelines and policies. They:	Professionals at Level II demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development. They:	Professionals at Level III demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills. They:	Professionals at Level IV demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities. They:
1. Relationships				
1.1 Respect	Treat each child with respect and understanding	Value each child as an individual, making an effort to recognize each child's unique characteristics, temperament, etc. Examples include, but are not limited to: • Allowing children to demonstrate personal interests through choices • Interacting responsively with children of different temperaments, levels of sociability, shyness, etc. • Recognizing each child's strengths • Understanding and accepting individual limitations	Interact with each child based on the individual child's specific and unique characteristics, strengths, interests, and needs	Use knowledge of child development theory and research as the basis for creating policies, designing environments and schedules, and working with staff and families to build positive relationships with each child in ways that affirm each child's cultural, linguistic, developmental, and individual identity

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
1.2 Psychological Safety and Attachment	Build trusting relationships with children, providing predictability and physical and emotional security and protect children from emotional harm (e.g., unnecessary fear or criticism) Provide continuity of care (same caregiver over an extended period) when working with children from birth to three years	Build attachment relationships with children by being sensitive and responsive to needs, providing continuity of care and predictability, and physical and emotional security in ways that enhance self-concept, self-regulation, and self-esteem	Model and help others acquire skills for establishing secure attachment relationships and maintaining children's psychological safety	Ensure that the program assistants and staff members establish and maintain an emotionally nurturing environment Stay up-to-date on evidence-based research that informs best practices to facilitate psychological safety and secure attachments, including continuity of care for infants and toddlers from birth to age three Provide continuity of care providers through effective and supportive program management
1.3 Respectful Voice Tones	Speak to children with calm, respectful tones	Nurture children's abilities to use respectful voice tones	Model and help others acquire skills for maintaining an atmosphere characterized by calm, respectful voice tones	Provide support and training to staff and others for achieving this practice
1.4 Building Trust	Provide consistent, predictable routines to ensure familiarity and trust.	Maintain a nurturing emotional climate that provides security for children. Examples include, but are not limited to, consistency and predictability of: • Adults present • Behavioral expectations • Guidance procedures • Daily/weekly routines • Transition activities	Model and help others create and maintain a nurturing emotional climate characterized by trusting relationships	Provide leadership for continuous monitoring of the environment for practices that nurture trusting relationships and share up-to-date evidence-based research on best practices related to building trust
1.5 Establishing a Calm, Unhurried Environment	Lead activities in a positive, calm, and pleasant atmosphere	Have realistic, appropriate expectations for children's capacity to participate in activities	Model and help others create and maintain a calm, non-hurried environment	Provide leadership for creating and maintaining a calm, non-hurried environment; share up-to-date best practices derived from evidence-based research on maintaining a calm environment
1.6 Respecting Diversity	Demonstrate respect for diversity of children's culture, language, and religion in all interactions	Actively nurture respect for diversity in group and individual interactions through modeling, behavioral guidance, and curriculum activities that reflect a welcoming environment for all young children	Model for and support others as they strive to develop skills for interacting with children and families in ways that respect all people	Oversee the program's strategies for achieving respect for diversity by staying up-to-date on evidence-based research that guides best practices for interacting in ways that respect all people

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
1.7 Accepting Individual Differences	Understand and accept individual differences in behavior as influenced by: • Age and stage of development • Family background • Culture • Ability • Temperament • Individual strengths • Interests	Model acceptance and nurture children's abilities to understand and accept differences among peers; affirm each child's cultural, linguistic, developmental, and individual identity	Model and help others as they develop skills to nurture children's abilities to understand and accept differences among peers and to affirm each child's cultural, linguistic, developmental, and individual identity	Oversee the program's strategies for promoting acceptance of all persons; stay up-to-date on research and theory that informs professionals' abilities to understand and accept individual differences and to promote similar understanding between and among children
2. Interactions with Persons of Various Ages Across the Lifespan				
2.1 Mixed-age Children's Groups	Appreciate the importance for children of having opportunities to interact children that are both older and younger than oneself	Create opportunities for mixed age peer-group activities	Model for others successful techniques for managing mixed-age group activities	Provide support to others as they strive to increase this competency by staying up-to-date on evidence-based research that informs best practices
2.2 Intergenerational Activities	Appreciate the importance for children of interacting with persons at different stages across the lifespan (i.e., teens, mature adults, aging persons)	Create opportunities for positive intergenerational activities	Model for others successful techniques for managing intergen-erational learning experiences	Provide support to others as they strive to increase this competency by staying up-to-date on evidence-based research that informs best practices
3. Group Interactions				
3.1 Group Process and Structure	Understand group processes (i.e., formation, interaction, dissolution)	Create opportunities for age-appropriate group as well as individual activities that provide children choice about participation depending on readiness for group experience	Model for others successful strategies for facilitating entry into a group, establishing group status, assigning roles, and changing group structure	Provide support to others as they strive to increase this competency by staying up-to-date on evidence-based research that informs best practices
3.2 Managing Group Behaviors	Appreciate the complexity of interactions that characterize group behaviors (in contrast to individual behaviors)	Observe group behaviors and plan further activities in accordance with current status of various groups	Model for others successful strategies for managing group behaviors	Provide support to others as they strive to increase this competency by staying up-to-date on evidence-based research that informs best practices

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
4. Communication				
4.1 Engaging in Various Forms of Communication	Engage with children using verbal and non-verbal communication and show individual attention to each child within the group on a regular basis	Use playful interactions as opportunities to build communications skills such as turn-taking, reciprocity, and mutual engagement in a topic of interest	Communicate respectfully with children by listening carefully and responding sensitively to each child as a participant in conversation	Provide support to others as they strive to increase this competency by staying up-to-date on evidence-based research that informs best practices
4.2 Basic Listening	Listen attentively to children, trying to understand what they want to communicate	Respond sensitively to differences in individual children's communication styles, use open ended questions, and active as well as passive listening	Employ responsive listening strategies with children who are typically developing as well as with children who have communication challenges to understand the intent of their communication	Provide support to others as they strive to increase this competency by staying up-to-date on evidence-based research that informs best practices
4.3 Listening for Feelings	Listen respectfully to the thoughts and feelings of others	Actively encourage children to listen with respect to others' thoughts and feelings by modeling, illustrating, prompting, and coaching	Model and encourage others to develop proficiency in helping children learn to listen with respect to others' thoughts and feelings	Oversee the program's strategies for planning, implementing, and assessing the learning environment for appropriate listening skills, and take steps to mitigate deficiencies when identified
4.4 Verbal and Non-Verbal Expression	Use appropriate and positive verbal and non-verbal skills to express thoughts and feelings in respectful and constructive ways	Use appropriate and positive verbal and non-verbal communication to: • Express thoughts and feelings in respectful and constructive ways • Nurture children's abilities to express thoughts and feelings in constructive ways	Model and encourage others to develop proficiency in using appropriate and positive verbal and non-verbal communication to express thoughts and feelings in respectful and constructive ways and help others develop proficiency in nurturing these skills in children	Oversee the program's strategies for planning, implementing, and assessing the ongoing use of appropriate and positive verbal and non-verbal communication to express thoughts and feelings in respectful and constructive ways, and take steps to mitigate deficiencies when identified
4.5 Communication Frequency	Communicate with children frequently, using both verbal and non-verbal means and face-to-face interactions	Provide multiple opportunities for children to converse with one another and with adults	Model frequent and effective communications and provide support to others as they strive to increase this competency.	Support others as they strive to increase this competency by staying up-to-date on evidence-based research that informs best practices

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
4.6 Vocal Communication Strategies	Articulate sounds and words clearly and appropriately when communicating with children Use various strategies to nurture desirable vocal interactions including, but not limited to: • Using open-ended questions • Naming objects • Naming actions • Describing relationships and ideas • Describing plans	Model and encourage children to use these vocal strategies when interacting with others	Monitor the learning environment for frequency and quality of vocal communication and make adjustments if needed, including adjustments in the environment's acoustic properties if necessary to abate interference with communication	Analyze up-to-date information on effective communication strategies and styles, model effective communication, and work with others who strive to support child-child and child-adult conversations.
4.7 Variation in Communication Strategies	Use various strategies to facilitate children's communication including: • Modeling (self-talk) • Using parallel talk • Using physical and verbal prompting • Using restatements • Expanding statements • Referring one child to another • Interpreting messages between children • Using open ended questions	Use various strategies including modeling and physical and verbal prompting to facilitate children's communication	Skillfully use and model various strategies including physical and verbal prompting to facilitate children's interaction in a manner that is responsive to the immediate situation and particular child	Oversee the program's strategies for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying strategies use various communication strategies

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5. Guidance				
5.1 Behavioral Expectations	Set and consistently reinforce expectations that are appropriate for the ages and stages of children and address inappropriate behaviors rather than labeling the child	Understand realistic expectations for children's behavior (e.g., attention spans, interests, social abilities, self-management) at different ages and ability levels	Model and help others achieve realistic expectations for children's behaviors at different ages and ability levels	Provide leadership for continuous improvement in the area of behavioral expectations by: • Developing written policies for guidance that are age appropriate and inclusive of children with disabilities • Staying up-to-date on evidence-based research that informs best practices related to behavioral expectations
5.2 Expectations for Respectful Interactions	Interact with children in ways that reflect respect for self and others	Assist children in identifying and expressing their feelings in culturally and socially acceptable ways	Provide opportunities for children who are developmentally ready for group work to develop cooperative group skills that focus on working in small groups, learning to achieve tasks through cooperation, negotiating, compromising, and problem solving	Provide support to others as they strive to refine skills in promoting respectful interactions
5.3 Nurturing Autonomy and Self-Regulation	Allow children to make simple choices (e. g., choose between two acceptable options for food, clothing, or play activities)	Help children develop inner controls and self-regulation by providing appropriate opportunities for independence and choice among activities and peers and helping them understand the relationship between the choices and the outcomes	Apply theories of child development to improve child guidance by employing practices that take into account children's personalities and levels of development and that demonstrate knowledge of instructional and guidance procedures for including children with and without disabilities	Stay up-to-date on research related to the origins of and relationships between self-regulation and self-assertion and help others to apply up-to-date knowledge in this area
5.4 Logical Consequences	Use guidance techniques that allow child to understand the relationship between choices and consequences in matters where health and safety are not an issue	Communicate to others the principles of guidance through the use of logical consequences	Model and nurture others' ability to use logical consequences	Plan activities to help assistants, staff members, and family members to learn the principles of logical consequences

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5.5 Prosocial Behavior	Model for children and encourage them to practice sharing, helping, and caring behaviors	Implement guidance practices that nurture prosocial behaviors	Plan curriculum experiences that enable children to understand and practice prosocial behaviors as individuals and as members of groups	Provide leadership for promoting prosocial behavior by staying up-to-date and sharing current research and theory on prosocial behavior
5.6 Managing Change	Plan and schedule anticipated changes with attention to minimizing anxiety and disruption of learning Manage unanticipated change calmly and help children understand the reasons for the change	Alert children to changes in activities or routines in advance when possible, and plan activities to facilitate transition from one activity to another Help children understand unexpected events, using the experience as a "teachable moment" when possible	Model and assist others as they develop skills for managing and incorporating anticipated and unanticipated change	Provide leadership for change management by informing staff of strategies for managing change and by reflecting on ways to better manage responses to change
5.7 Prevention of Behavioral Problems	Maintain consistent rules for safety, care of materials, and above all for protection of physical and psycho-logical safety of children Avoid unnecessary conflict by providing sufficient quantities of materials and equipment for the number of children and by minimizing competition Recognize rising tension and promptly redirect the child, group, or activity Help individual children to apply anger interruption and calming techniques for themselves (as appropriate to age and development)	Anticipate and defuse disruptive behavior by avoiding stimuli and circumstances that lead to challenging behaviors. Monitor results of planned strategies and adjust the plan for each child as outcomes dictate.	Adapt the learning environment and curriculum to engage children, respond to children's interests, promote cooperative play, and develop supportive relationships while minimizing potentially challenging behaviors Assess behavior patterns and identify the precursors and triggers for children who have behavior control issues in order to develop individual plans and strategies for adults to apply in avoiding or channeling potentially disruptive behaviors	Design and develop cooperative group activities and stay current research and theory related to prevention of behavioral problems

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5.8 Challenging Behaviors	Consistently enforce behavioral limits that are appropriate for the age and ability level of children	Differentiate between typical testing of behavioral limits versus behaviors that are indicate serious adjustment difficulties	Use observational and assessment tools to identify and to respond to individual behavioral problems related to development, learning, environmental conditions or emotional stress and determine appropriate replacement behaviors and strategies for instruction and support of the child in using those behaviors	Develop individual guidance plans, accessing relevant professionals for support as needed
5.9 Conflict Resolution	Use verbal strategies and listening skills to obtain information about conflicts that occur; describe the thoughts, feelings, and goals of those involved; and encourage children to find solutions such as turn-taking, sharing, and restitution	Model problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies and mediate/provide support to children as they work to resolve their own conflicts with others	Model and help others learn various methods for problem solving and conflict resolution and articulate these strategies to family members and peers	Provide leadership and share current research and theories that inform conflict resolution practices

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
6. Family Collaboration				
6.1 Positive Communication	Listen to and communicate positively with families regarding behavioral expectations and guidance practices used in the program	Work with families to enhance understanding of children's needs and appropriate guidance practices	Collaborate with families to develop individually appropriate expectations for children's behavior and, as needed, refer families to appropriate community and health resources for support in promoting positive behavior in young children	Analyze and articulate current research on child guidance, then share information on guidance techniques and healthy social-emotional development with families
6.2 Respecting Family Values	Demonstrate respect for the values, ideas, and expectations of families	Communicate respect for the values, ideas and expectations of families including differences in interaction styles and guidance practices	Use direct and indirect strategies for helping children and adults develop and communicate respect for values, ideas, and expectations of families without compromising one's own values. Share the rationale and research for recommended changes in behavior management techniques when encouraging parents to adopt or revise child-rearing expectations and interventions	Support others' efforts to create a climate of respect that allows for diversity in values, ideas, and expectations without compromising one's own values
6.3 Collaborative Guidance	Communicate with family members about behavioral expectations, values, and ideas by articulating expectations of the program and listening to concerns of family members	Communicate with families regarding areas of concern, developing cooperative strategies to manage problems	Model and help others develop strategies for communicating with families regarding areas of interest and concern, and by developing cooperative strategies to manage problems	Ensure that the program assists families to meet their unique developmental and behavioral interests/concerns for their children and by staying up-to-date on strategies for collaborative guidance
6.4 Resources for Behavioral Interventions	Seek information and guidance from literature and community agencies that can assist with resolving challenging behavioral issues	Share publications and community resources that provide information and support for responding to challenging behavioral issues	Provide access to information and resources to assist families with children who have unique developmental and/or behavioral issues that suggest outside intervention and/or support	Support others as they develop professional skills for responding to unusually challenging behavioral problems

Rationale:

The quality of early childhood education and care is dramatically affected by the competence and leadership of a program leader who plans, assesses, and modifies the program on a continuing basis. Successful programs have leaders who design and manage policies, procedures, and systems that comply with governmental regulations, ensure quality learning experiences for children, and maintain financial soundness. Because children's emotional well-being and social competency is dependent largely on stable and nurturing relationships with caring adults, effective program managers foster an organizational climate that is supportive of staff needs so that highly qualified personnel are recruited and retained. Since optimal development occurs in environments with safe, comfortable, and aesthetically pleasing surroundings that stimulate curiosity and promote active engagement with learning materials, the manager or administrator also oversees the design, arrangement, and maintenance of the facility in which the program is housed.

Knowledge:

1. Effective managers of early care and education programs understand the fundamentals of management principles, theories, responsibilities, and ethics. They understand that:
   - Business/corporate law and regulatory compliance requirements are basic to establishing and operating a business.
   - Managerial responsibilities (e.g., planning strategic, tactical, operational, and transitional models; financing, budgeting, organizing, directing, controlling and monitoring, staffing, marketing) are essential components of successful business operation.
   - Problem-solving principles, strategies, and techniques as well as critical thinking are crucial to the successful operation of a business.
   - Long range and short term strategies can keep a program viable and able to achieve its mission under changing conditions (e.g., macro-environmental scanning, trends analyses, cause-targeted problem-solving, and systematic approaches for continuous quality improvement).
   - Policies, procedures and systems must be designed and managed in accordance with the program's mission.
   - Positive organizational climate fosters trust, creativity, enthusiastic commitment to the mission, to teamwork, and to inclusion.

2. The physical facility in which a program is housed has a major impact on all aspects of program functioning and must be safe, comfortable, supportive, and welcoming to children, staff, and families.

3. Early childhood professionals understand that local, state, and national regulations govern the operation of the program.
   - Early childhood care and education programs are subject to all laws and governmental regulations that affect licensure and operation.
   - Continuous monitoring is required to ensure that all regulations are met.
   - Clearly articulated policies and procedures provide a systematic framework for documenting and reporting compliance with regulation.
   - High quality programs achieve standards of excellence that exceed standards for licensure and strive continuously to achieve optimal levels of functioning in all components of the program.

4. Fiscal soundness is required for program survival.
   - Fiscal soundness requires effective budget planning, with attention to priorities that support the mission of the program.
   - Effective financial management involves competent use of information and accounting systems.
   - Appropriate insurance, including liability insurance, is needed for children, staff, and facilities.
   - Income and expenditures should be reconciled on a regular basis.
   - Periodic reports on the program's fiscal condition should be made to appropriate stakeholders (e.g., advisory board).

5. Early childhood professionals understand that human resources management is essential to program success.

- A supportive organizational climate is essential for establishing and maintaining employee satisfaction, which is known to affect recruitment and retention of highly qualified professionals.
- A supportive work environment fosters the abilities of professionals to perform early care and education functions optimally. The supportive work environment includes, but is not limited to the following:
  - Clearly articulated personnel policies and procedures
  - Hiring practices that reflect the social and cultural make-up of the community being served
  - Flexible schedules that accommodate needs of staff members for rest, family responsibilities, activity, planning, and collegial activities
  - Staff compensation that motivates employees to improve skills and continue their employment
  - A physical facility that is comfortable, clean, safe, and aesthetically pleasing with adequate space for rest, instructional planning, and preparation of learning materials
  - Cooperative, inclusive, and mutually supportive collegial relationships among staff members
  - Policies that comply with federal and state laws related to wages and working conditions and that include mechanisms for recourse and adjustment
  - Ongoing professional development opportunities that help retain highly competent early care and development professionals
  - Observation, documentation, and assessment procedures to support the professional development of program staff

6. Effective program leaders establish policies, procedures, and systems to facilitate implementation of the program's mission, goals, and philosophy. These functions include, but are not limited to the following:
   - Curriculum planning
   - Procedures that ensure practice of universal health and safety precautions, including first aid and CPR
   - Communication with representatives of community organizations, agencies, and resources
   - Communication with families, in writing and in a manner they can understand, regarding the following:
     - Child's developmental progress
     - Physical well-being including, but not limited to, food intake, sleep patterns, signs of illness, and administration of medications
     - Daily routines and plans for special activities
     - Procedures for addressing issues related to guidance of behavior
     - Transportation arrangements
     - Emergency communication and evacuation plans
     - Policies regarding confidentiality
   - Procedures for individualized plans for children with special needs
   - Space allocation for all program functions
   - Schedules for programming, assessment, facility maintenance, employee breaks or vacation
   - Staff assignments and relief staff roster to ensure ample staff to child ratios

7. Collaborative relationships with community organizations, agencies, and resources that contribute to early childhood care and education are mutually beneficial to children, families, and to the larger community.

8. Early childhood professionals with leadership responsibilities demonstrate knowledge of a variety of ways to evaluate and modify program goals and activities. For example,
   - They develop and use both formative and summative evaluations to comprehensively ensure continuous quality improvement in the program.
   - They use both reflective evaluations of their individual practices as well as collaborative evaluations as part of the ongoing program evaluation.
   - They involve all stakeholders in program evaluation.

Practices Based on Knowledge:

Building on knowledge of sound business practices, effective educational programming, and human resources management, effective administrators design, implement, evaluate and modify policies and procedures that support the organization's mission to serve children and families. They provide leadership to:

1. Implement the steps needed to ensure compliance with governmental laws and regulations and with professional standards.

2. Design and maintain safe, comfortable and supportive physical environments for children, staff, and families.

3. Design and implement systems for planning and managing monetary resources.

4. Create an organizational climate that promotes the recruitment, support, development, and retention of highly qualified staff members.

5. Oversee the planning, implementation, assessment, and continuous improvement of the program mission, goals, and philosophy.

6. Establish and maintain collaborative relationships with community organizations and resources for the benefit of the children and families served as well as for the community as a whole.

7. Utilize data from program evaluations and involve stakeholders to revise procedures and plan new program goals.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Early childhood professionals at ALL LEVELS have knowledge related to:	Professionals at Level I implement practices according to program guidelines and policies. They:	Professionals at Level II demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development. They:	Professionals at Level III demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills. They:	Professionals at Level IV demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities. They:
1. Regulatory Standards				
1.1 Required Legal Standards	Understand and comply with all applicable legal and regulatory standards	Monitor the environment for continuous compliance with: • Staff policies and procedures • Applicable legal and regulatory standards	Model and help others develop ways to establish and maintain high quality standards that meet or exceed minimal regulatory requirement Thoroughly analyze incidents of non-compliance and develop and monitor a plan of causal or systemic correction to ensure future compliance	Develop policies, procedures, and training systems to ensure compliance with governmental regulations and professional standards
1.2 Regulations from Other Agencies	Receive training about other agency requirements	Assist program leader by keeping records to document compliance with agency regulations	Help others understand and comply with regulations from other agencies	Ensure that staff members are appropriately trained on policies and information from other agencies, keep up-to-date information posted Develop and review training plans to meet the requirements from the Health Department, OSHA (Blood-Borne Pathogens and Hazardous Materials), Hourly Wage, FMLA, ADA, etc.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
1.3 Voluntary Compliance with Quality Standards	Demonstrate awareness of standards of quality advocated by professional organizations Perform some tasks that are beyond the basic job requirements	Plan ways to meet quality standards that may exceed regulatory codes Often initiate practices that are beyond the basic requirements	Model and help others implement steps to meet quality standards that may exceed regulatory codes	Assume leadership for voluntarily developing, implementing, and revising the practices that exceed regulatory codes
1.4 Record Keeping	Keep records of children's attendance, growth, health status, and developmental achievements in accordance with program policies and methods designed to meet regulatory codes	Establish a system for maintaining daily records required by governmental regulations and check routinely to ensure that required information has been recorded	Model and help others understand the process of establishing record keeping systems that document compliance with regulatory codes, including systematic monitoring methods	Develop procedures for recording and reporting information, and for documenting compliance with all relevant legal requirements and professional standards
1.5 Display of License or Certificate	Indicate where license or certificate can be viewed	Display license or certificate of compliance in a publicly accessible place Encourage families to read compliance reports available on-site and online	Model and instruct staffs in the psychological and monetary value of the license or certificate and instill pride in their contributions to the team achievements the document represents	Display license or certificate of compliance in a publicly accessible place and ensure that staff are aware of this requirement
1.6 Planning for Emergencies	Follow program guidelines for responding to emergencies and share these with family members	Communicate to family members the program's guidelines for responding to emergencies and assist program leader by suggesting strategies for emergency responses Offer materials to encourage and assist families to develop home and family-based plans for response to emergencies	Help others understand and plan effective strategies for facilitating emergency response plans	Develop and enforce a written plan for responding to emergencies based on current recommendations from agencies and organizations that specialize in emergency preparedness

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2. Physical Facility				
2.1 Facilities Management	Perform routine tasks that contribute to a well-organized, clean, safe, and aesthetically pleasing physical environment, both inside and outside	Initiate ways to engage children, staff, volunteers, and family members in enhancing the physical environment	Plan learning activities that help children appreciate and contribute to the design and maintenance of a well-organized, clean, safe, and aesthetically pleasing physical environment	Support others' efforts to enhance the program's facility by: • Keeping up to date and informing others of new theories and research on the effect various aspects of the physical environment on learning and development, including knowledge of environmentally friendly facility maintenance and operation • Providing budgetary support for proper maintenance, including preventive maintenance schedules, refurbishment, and enhancement of the physical facility
2.2 Environmental Monitoring	Monitor the physical environment continuously for evidence of potentially hazardous environmental conditions and promptly report such occurrence to a supervisor	Use behavioral guidelines that nurture children's ability to preserve a clean, safe, and well-organized learning environment	Model and nurture other professionals as they learn effective strategies for arranging and maintaining a clean, safe, well-organized, and aesthetically pleasing physical environment conducive to learning and development	Develop systematic policies and procedures for: • Monitoring the physical environment for potential health or occupational hazards • Reporting possible hazards to the public health authorities • Taking steps to mitigate potential problems, once identified

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2.3 Responsibility for Environment	Use practices that contribute to a safe and pleasant learning environment Nurture children's ability to care for the physical environment (e.g., watering plants, sharing art work)	Conduct systematic monitoring to ensure that the internal and external environments are consistently maintained in safe and serviceable condition Take steps to arrange and modify the physical environment to support learning and group sharing of a common space	Nurture other professionals' abilities to arrange and improve the physical components of the learning environment	Oversee routine maintenance and enhancement of the physical environment in order to provide an optimal environment for learning and developing Establish preventive maintenance and housekeeping schedules designed to avoid breakdowns Oversee ordering, storage and inventory of supplies and equipment for facility maintenance
2.4 Space	Maintain personal space appropriately and perform routine tasks to manage the use of space for various activities	Plan for effective use of space by adults and children	Help others to arrange space in ways that enhance playful learning, social skills, community building	Provide for appropriate space for children and adults (e.g., staff lounge, meeting space, quiet space, etc.)

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3. Budget Management				
3.1 Budget Management	Use materials, equipment, and other resources prudently to avoid waste without compromising quality	Keep an ongoing inventory of supplies and materials with attention to the use of low-cost, recyclable materials when possible	Continuously update knowledge of cost-effective materials and activities that can enhance children's learning experiences Provide information to staff members on budgetary matters, and teach them the principles of program-based budgeting	Develop long range and short-term budget plans designed to facilitate programmatic goals. This includes, but is not limited to: • Establishing fees • Developing procedures for staff to request resources equitably • Distributing budgetary resources equitably • Compensating staff for professional development and job performance
3.2 Budget Planning	Inform supervisor of specific materials or supplies needed, providing supervisor with sufficient lead time	Request supplies and materials as needed in accordance with prescribed procedures Track and project expenses in order to advise staff member with financial responsibility of potential short-falls or surpluses in order to use resources to best advantages	Participate in budget planning	Develop a yearly budget to include sufficient resources to achieve program goals; seek input from stakeholders in budget planning File appropriate reports to entities as required (e.g., taxes, licensing, etc.) Ensure an independent review of accounting records
3.3 Budget Monitoring	Assist as requested regarding monitoring of expenditures	Monitor own resource expenditures	Help others acquire skills for monitoring resource expenditure	Develop and/or review monthly and quarterly income and expense statements to determine fiscal status Adjust spending accordingly and report to appropriate stakeholders (board, funding sources, etc.)
3.4 Resource Acquisition	Demonstrate awareness of the resources (financial, human, material) needed to offer a high quality program	Develop strategies for gaining access to material and non-material resources	Provide information or assistance for securing grants or other resources	Initiate activities to secure resources (e.g., gifts, grants, in-kind contributions, volunteer time), including collaboration with community organizations

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3.5 Marketing	Provide information about ongoing activities and successes that merit public awareness	Accurately answer basic questions about program structure, philosophy, and affordability for potential clients	Participate in opportunities to increase public awareness of services provided by the program (e.g., news coverage, public appearances at community events)	Position program in the community to build awareness and positive reputation Capitalize on opportunities for public recognition of program in the community
3.6 Technology	Demonstrate awareness of and learn to use appropriate technology (e.g., computers for children's use, internet for research and updating knowledge)	Utilize available technology resources for professional development and communicating with other professionals Provide assistance with technology to new staff	Integrate technology in budget planning, curriculum, marketing, staffing, continuing education, and communicating with other profes-sionals	Develop a technology plan for administration, staff, and children
3.7 Accounting	Make and record simple monetary transactions	Use the program's approved accounting system to track income and expenditures	Develop accounting system using up-to-date methods and help others develop basic accounting skills	Have an independent review or audit of financial records
3.8 Insurance	Demonstrate awareness of the importance of insurance coverage Use proper procedures to minimize risk	Submit appropriate information to the insurer when a claim is filed	Help others acquire skills for minimizing risk and, when necessary, filing an insurance claim when necessary	Contract for insurance coverage for children, personnel, property and professional liability and communicate the extent of coverage to staff and family members
3.9 Risk Reduction	Follow program guidelines for minimizing risk for injury, property loss, or professional liability Promptly advise management of newly detected hazards or weaknesses in the existing risk reduction plan	Plan learning experiences that reinforce safety procedures (e.g., evacuation drills) Continuously monitor environment for potential risks	Assist others in minimizing insurance risks	Provide leadership for developing a facility-wide risk reduction plan and for training and monitoring staff in order to minimize risk for injury, property loss, or professional liability
3.10 Emergency Drills	Be aware of and participate fully in emergency response drills	Monitor and plan for emergency response drills. Assist in post-drill evaluations	Develop policies and train staff on emergency preparedness. Assist in the assessment and revision processes Perform scheduled monitoring to ensure that emergency response supplies and equipment are available and in working condition	Update policies and any changes to emergency preparedness plan, including, but not limited to, child abuse, fire, severe weather storm, intruder, accident and illness Establish a process to evaluate and as necessary revise plans in response to new advisories, drills, rehearsals, and periodic reviews by staff and safety consultants

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
4. Human Resources Management				
4.1 Human Resources Policies	Review and accept personnel policies that describe the terms of employment; seek clarification or assistance for any performance expectations or terms of employment as necessary Utilize feedback from supervisors to improve practice	Monitor environment for signs of failure to comply with policies and report incidences of non-compliance to appropriate authority, if needed Inform others of your observation when incidences of policy violation are noted	Orient new staff to policies and keep others informed of changes Provide planned refresher training on policies and procedures Meet with staff member(s) immediately when policies or procedures need to be corrected Conduct regular, ongoing observations of staff and provide coaching to correct undesired practices and provide guidance toward exemplary practices	With input from stakeholders develop written human resources policies that are congruent with the program's mission, goals, philosophy, current laws, and evidence-based best practices Develop and provide staff members with a manual or notebook of standard operating procedures that clearly detail expected methods of performing duties Review and update periodically and after any major incident involving deviation from prescribed practices
4.2 Internal Communication	Attend staff meetings and supervisory conferences, and read memos and notices	Initiate internal communication (e.g., memos, notices, e-mail messages) when needed	Model and support others in initiating appropriate internal communication	Develop methods to communicate with staff members individually and collectively (e.g., oral, newsletters, memos, e-mail, bulletin board)
4.3 Schedule	Adhere to work schedule and maintain attendance Request personal leave well in advance and provide helpful information on activities, lesson plans, and status of each child for the person who will provide coverage Give maximum notice for any unscheduled leave (e.g., illness or family emergency)	Cooperate with colleagues and supervisor to create flexibility in scheduling	Develop and model for others various strategies for creating flexible scheduling and for integrating persons providing temporary coverage into the program with minimum disruption for children and staff	Construct flexible work schedule while providing needed consistency for children and families Develop plans and resources to ensure suitable coverage when staff are absent because of planned or unplanned leave, to include appropriate orientation or training and oversight of persons providing temporary coverage

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
4.4 Employee Satisfaction	Participate in assessments of job satisfaction	Express satisfaction in nurturing children's development as well as appropriately express concerns about issues related to working conditions	Express appreciation to other staff members for commendable service Express one's own concerns and listen to others regarding work conditions and professional satisfaction Articulate, from research and from experience, the contributions of early care and education to the well-being of society at all levels (i.e., from neighborhood to international aspects)	Provide leadership for designing a program environment based on research and theory about employee satisfaction – both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators Design and implement regular assessments of employee satisfaction and, when appropriate, take steps to reduce factors found to be contributing to dissatisfaction
4.5 Employee Recognition	Express appreciation to colleagues for their contributions to the organizational climate	Use various strategies to recognize contributions of colleagues, volunteers, and administrators Model the principle that success is contagious. Seize and create frequent opportunities to celebrate "little victories" – and involve children as well as staff	Model and nurture others' skills in recognizing contributions of colleagues, volunteers, and administrators	Provide leadership for continuous improvement of policies and systems for employee recognition, especially those that recognize or emphasize team or program-wide cooperation in achievements in order to avoid undue emphasis on competition rather than collaboration
4.6 Compensation	Work diligently to fulfill job requirements for which compensation is given Seek supervisor's advice on opportunities to attend training or engage in self-study to increase knowledge, effectiveness and value to the organization.	Participate in professional development activities that lead to increased compensation	Encourage others to participate in professional development activities that lead to increased compensation	Design pay scale so that outstanding performance can be compensated. Consider including several bonus plans to encourage excellence (e.g., special efforts to upgrade skills, accomplishment of projects that contribute to child or program achievement, etc.) as a potentially more affordable means of rewarding extra effort without altering the basic compensation structure Use a salary scale that is differentiated by role, education, specialized training, and years of relevant experience Review salary scale regularly

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
4.7 Benefits	Utilize but do not abuse benefits offered	Provide feedback to administrators regarding satisfaction with and use of benefits	Consistently apply benefits to staff and help others to use benefits as appropriate	Provide leadership in securing benefits for staff (e.g., health, life and disability insurance, retirement, sick leave, vacation, training days, holidays, education, tax-deferred savings plans, medical savings accounts, free or reduced tuition for staff members' children, etc.)
4.8 Advocacy	Recognize the role of advocacy in improving work conditions of early childhood professionals	Participate in activities that support the early childhood profession	Articulate the importance of compensation for skilled professional services	Advocate on behalf of early education and care professionals for just compensation for skilled professional services Advocate on behalf of all citizens for sound evidence-based regulations and laws to protect the well-being of children, professionals, and society at large
4.9 Collegiality	Cooperate with and support co-workers and volunteers Express appreciation to others for guidance and for feedback on performance	Create opportunities to engage in positive, cooperative ways as a member of a team Initiate actions that express appreciation to coworkers for participating in a mutually reinforcing organizational climate	Model and help others contribute to positive organizational climate	Assess organizational climate and make adjustments on an on-going basis to maintain a positive and vibrant environment for staff and volunteers
4.10 Professional Development	Participate in orientation and further training opportunities Set personal and career objectives and develop a personal plan for ongoing professional development	Participate in professional development activities (e.g., reading, taking classes, attending workshops, professional meetings, etc.) on a regular basis	Model and encourage other professionals to engage in continuous professional development	Provide leadership and resources to support others in creating and fulfilling professional development plans Make information available on traditional and distance learning opportunities Share evidence-based research articles and Internet sites that will promote professional growth Create a knowledge-driven organization that includes research and discussion of practice issues informally and during staff meetings

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
4.11 Staff Assessment	Aware of staff assessment procedures Participate in performance evaluations by completing self-assessment instruments and supplying information as requested Respond to feedback from supervisors to improve performance on an ongoing basis	Provide information requested for staff assessment Initiate self-assessment Seek assistance in knowledge or practice areas where skills are weaker and in areas where curiosity or desire for growth is greater	Participate in self-assessment Share progress with supervisor Encourage others to participate in self-assessment	Create and implement, with the staff, a plan for evaluating staff performance on a regular basis and share the results of the evaluation with staff. Include goals and professional development targets Reward professional competence and performance in a variety of ways including recognition, monetary compensation, and an invitation to assume responsibilities that require additional competencies
4.12 Assessment of Program Director	Participate by sharing perceptions of administrator's performance	Participate by sharing information regarding administrator's performance and by suggesting areas for improvement	Participate by sharing information regarding administrator's performance and by suggestion strategies for continuous quality improvement	Involve stakeholders in designing and using assessments of administrator's performance Respond to feedback by making programmatic changes when appropriate and feasible

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5. Program Planning and Evaluation				
5.1 Planning the Learning Environment	Demonstrate awareness that daily activities and routines are created to fulfill the mission, goals, and philosophy of the program	Plan learning experiences that support the program's mission, goals, and philosophy	Help to assess and improve plan effectiveness through systematic information collection and analysis	Communicate the plan to families, staff, volunteers, and community
5.2 Mission, Goals, Philosophy	Review and demonstrate an understanding of the program's mission statement, goals, and philosophy	Articulate the program's mission, goals, and philosophy to families and other professionals	Assist with research necessary for periodic assessment of changes in the internal and external environments, market base, labor pool, economic indicators, etc., to help determine whether adjustments in mission, goals, and objectives are needed	With input from stakeholders, provide leadership for developing mission statement, program goals, and philosophy
5.3 Program Evaluation	Participate in program assessment by sharing information as requested by evaluation team	Participate in program assessment by sharing information as requested by an evaluation team and suggesting additional areas that should be included	Participate in program evaluation by reviewing and interpreting assessment data Assist in using assessment results to develop action plans for professional development of staff members	Conduct an annual program evaluation and share the information with appropriate stakeholders Help stakeholders understand implications of evaluation results for developmental outcomes of children and their families Use assessment results to develop action plans for professional development of staff members Invite stakeholders to participate in analyzing and interpreting implications of assessment data for program revision Respond to feedback from governing or advisory board or council and take leadership for continuous quality improvement Plan, implement, and revise as needed, systemic procedures for assessing progress toward achieving program mission and goals

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5.4 Support of Learning	Develop or use an appropriate curriculum based on the ages, stages goals, objectives and philosophy of the program.	Extend and modify curriculum to maximize opportunities for learning that are appropriate for ages and stages of children as well as the goals, objectives, and philosophy of the program	Help others acquire skills for modifying and extending curriculum to optimize learning opportunities for all children	Review curriculum periodically to ensure that it is aligned with current research on best practices and make modifications when needed Observe staff members to assess curriculum and staff performance, provide feedback, and recommend modifications when appropriate
6. Families and Community				
6.1 Family Communication	Demonstrate skill in communicating with family members about program goals/philosophy, events, and children's activities	Use various methods to communicate with families on a regular basis about program goals, events, and children's activities	Help others develop skills for communicating effectively with families	Develop procedures for orientation of family members and entry of child into program and communicate the plan to staff and families

Rationale:

Professional development in early childhood education contributes to continuous advancement of the field by supporting ongoing development of knowledge and practices that contribute to the quality of life for all young children and their families. Professionalism in early childhood education and care requires (a) engaging in ongoing dialogue with others, both within and outside the field, to advance the state of knowledge through various types of observation, research, and reflection; (b) communicating the importance of high quality care and education for young children; and (c) constructing and monitoring compliance with guidelines for best practice that exceed governmental requirements. Early childhood professionals must understand the laws and regulations that guide practice, as well as voluntary standards that exceed legal requirements. As individuals committed to improving the lives of young children and their families, early childhood professionals serve as effective advocates for policies and procedures that support optimal development. Above all, professionals in the field of early childhood model high standards for ethical practice.

Knowledge:

1. Professional practice in early childhood education and care is governed by quality indicators prescribed by federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and by policy statements of governing boards. It is enhanced by standards and position statements of professional organizations.
   - Early care and education professionals make decisions concerning program planning and practice based on current federal, state, and local laws and regulations for safe, nurturing, inclusive, and enriching programs.
   - In addition to meeting legal and regulatory requirements, professionals take steps to achieve high quality standards advocated by professional organizations that often exceed legal requirements.

2. Professional development is an ongoing process of maintaining current knowledge and practice, participating in ongoing professional development opportunities, and engaging in ongoing synthesis and critical analysis of research and theory as it is applied to practice.
   - Professionalism requires knowledge and competency in all areas of child growth and development, educational strategies, and skills to develop, implement, and manage high-quality programs.
   - Professionalism requires the integration of reflective teaching practice into daily program operations.
   - Professional development is demonstrated and evaluated by early childhood professionals through the construction and implementation of job performance plans.
   - Professional development requires a commitment to continue learning through reading, research, reflection, and ongoing dialogue with other professionals.

3. Professionalism includes advocacy for improving the quality of life for all young children and their families.
   - Professionalism includes the ability to explain professional practice as it relates to research, theory, and professional guidelines and standards.
   - Professionalism involves the ability to clearly articulate the significance of the early years and the value of early childhood education and care programs to families and to the community while working collaboratively with families, colleagues, and community members to develop program practices and policies that are responsive to and appropriate for children and their families.
   - Professionalism promotes leadership skills that enable early childhood practitioners to develop skills needed in order to advocate for high quality programming at local, state, and federal levels.

4. Professionalism involves the ability to interact ethically with colleagues and families as well as with board and community members to build partnerships that support growth and development of the entire learning community.

5. Professionalism includes a commitment to a code of ethics that respects the confidentiality of all members while working to support the healthy development of children and their families.

Practices Based on Knowledge:

Early childhood professionals in a variety of types of settings where young children learn and develop:

1. Focus on integrating high quality standards and practices into the development, implementation, and management of programs serving young children and their families.

2. Demonstrate commitment to acquiring and maintaining current professional knowledge and to ongoing professional development. This includes acquiring the necessary skills to engage in competent research and to contribute to the professional and popular literature in order to expand the base of knowledge within the profession and for the public at large.

3. Advocate high quality early childhood care and education programs that serve young children and their families.

4. Interact with colleagues, families, board members, and the broader community in ethical ways to build authentic partnerships that support the healthy growth and development of young children.

5. Follow and model a professional code of ethics.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Early childhood professionals at ALL LEVELS have knowledge related to:	Professionals at Level I implement practices according to program guidelines and policies. They:	Professionals at Level II demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development. They:	Professionals at Level III demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills. They:	Professionals at Level IV demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities. They:
1. Commitment to Quality				
1.1 Regulatory Standards	Understand and comply with legal and regulatory mandates related to daily practices that promote safe and healthy learning environments for children and professionals	Maintain high quality standards that exceed minimal regulatory requirements	Model and help others develop ways to establish and maintain high quality standards that exceed minimal regulatory requirements	Assume leadership for developing, implementing, and revising the practices that meet and exceed regulatory codes
1.2 Quality Improvement	Follow guidelines to implement practices that exceed governmental regulations	Set up a system for documenting practices that exceed governmental requirements and comply with current standards recommended by professional organizations	Model for others and help others develop practices that meet high quality standards recommended by professional organizations	Plan, implement, assess, and modify strategies to meet high quality standards recommended by professional organizations

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2. Professional Development				
2.1 Content Knowledge	Possess skills in math and language equivalent to the level of a high school graduate	Possess skills in math, language/literacy, science, social studies, and early childhood content equivalent to having completed two years of post-secondary education	Possess knowledge and skills in math, language/literacy, science, social studies, and early childhood content as appropriate for a graduate of a four-year institution of higher learning	Possess an advanced degree in early childhood education and use that degree to provide leadership that promotes continuing education for self and others
2.2 Use of Resources	Use materials, time, and space effectively	Develop various systems for effective use of materials, time, and space	Model and encourage others to use effectively materials, time, and space	Oversee the effective use of materials, time, and space in the program
2.3 Hygiene and Appropriate Dress	Practice good hygiene and dress appropriately for interacting with young children in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities	Continue to practice good hygiene and appropriate dress and help others understand the importance of dressing appropriately for a variety of activities	Model and encourage others to practice good hygiene and to dress appropriately for working with young children in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities	Plan and implement strategies for encouraging assistants and/or staff members to practice good hygiene and to maintain appropriate appearance for interacting with young children in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities
2.4 Professional Attitude	Demonstrate a positive, responsible, sensitive, and respectful attitude in working with young children and their families	Further develop skills for demonstrating positive, responsible, sensitive, and respectful attitudes in working with young children and their families	Model and encourage others to demonstrate positive, responsible, sensitive, and respectful attitudes in working with young children and their families	Provide leadership in development and maintenance of positive, responsible, sensitive, and respectful attitudes in working with young children and their families
2.5 Positive Relationships with Colleagues	Demonstrate care for and acceptance and support of others working in the program	Further extend care and acceptance of others working in the program by listening to concerns and by providing supportive assistance when appropriate	Model and encourage others to demonstrate care for and acceptance of others working in the program	Provide program leadership for establishing and improving practices of caring for and accepting others
2.6 Professional Work Habits	Exhibit professional work habits including confidentiality, respect for all people, dependability, time management, independence, and teamwork	Further extend efficiency and effectiveness in work habits	Model and encourage others to exhibit professional work habits including confidentiality, respect for all people, dependability, time management, independence, and teamwork	Oversee ongoing strategies to facilitate improvement in work habits including confidentiality, respect for all people, dependability, time management, independence, and teamwork

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2.7 Supporting Program Goals	Show commitment to program goals and participate in their achievement and periodic review	Align activities with program goals	Help others find ways to contribute to attainment of program goals	Monitor and share with others the program's progress toward goals
2.8 Continuous Updating of Knowledge	Attend orientation, read/view training materials on early childhood education and care, and/or participate in additional opportunities to increase competency for working with young children and families	Read professional journals and communicate with other professionals (e.g., conferences, workshops) to learn about current trends and best practices (derived from evidence-based research) for working with young children and families	Review current evidence-based research on early childhood practices and make decisions based on current information Share resources and help to instill a love of learning throughout the organization, including its staffs, children, and families Stay up to date on research and policies related to early childhood	Practice and disseminate knowledge in local, state, regional, and national publications and/or meetings
2.9 Participating in Reflective Practice and Research/Inquiry	Participate in reflective practice or research by keeping records, sharing observations, and/or providing technical support to researchers	Formulate questions that arise from ongoing practice and seek answers through observation, journaling and reflection, reading research, or consultation with other professionals	Read research and apply beneficial techniques or knowledge as appropriate Plan and carry out research/inquiry designed to generate information that informs practice	Plan and carry out research/inquiry designed to generate information that informs practice Provide leadership for planning, implementing, and evaluating ongoing research designed to answer practical questions related to best practices Communicate research needs to professions and disciplines that relate directly and indirectly to the early education field so as to expand the necessary holistic network of knowledge that bears on child and family well-being
2.10 Philosophy of Early Childhood Practice	Support and implement program philosophy and begin to formulate own philosophy of education	Articulate a personal philosophy of early childhood professional practice informed by theory and research	Model for and support others as they develop and articulate a philosophy of early childhood professional practice	Oversee the development of program philosophy and assist others as they develop and articulate a philosophy of early childhood professional practice

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2.11 Foundations of Early Childhood Practice	Demonstrate awareness of developmental milestones and good early childhood practice	Demonstrate understanding of major theories and principles of development and commit to using them to implement good early childhood practices	Identify historical, philosophical, psychological and social foundations of education including early childhood education and help others understand their relevance to practice	Oversee continuous program improvement based upon current trends in early childhood practice and an understanding of the foundations of early childhood practice and education
2.12 Balancing Work and Personal Growth	Strive to prioritize responsibilities and balance daily commitments	Recognize causes and symptoms of "burnout" and develop strategies to prevent it	Model behaviors that promote the ability to balance responsibilities and make choices that minimize staff stress	Develop and implement personnel practices that promote staff morale by listening carefully to concerns of assistants/staff members and by taking initiative to continuously improve the work environment
2.13 Continuous Professional Development	Participate in professional development activities such as: • Attend orientation • Read or view training materials on early childhood education and care • Consult with other professionals • Learn to do library and Internet research to explore information for immediate use and to expand knowledge base	Have a professional development plan that includes acquiring additional knowledge and skills through activities such as: • Staff development workshops • Professional organizations • Reading professional publications • Formal course work • Journaling and reflection • Seeking and using feedback from other professionals	Explore models of professional development and promote others' professional growth through modeling, consulting, and mentoring	Ensure that assistants and staff members develop and implement professional growth plans that reflect understandings of adult learning theory, personal and organizational change theory, and current research in early childhood education Expand learning opportunities through use of traditional and electronic delivery systems
3. Advocacy				
3.1 Communicating with the Broader Community	Communicate clearly with parents and colleagues about early childhood practices	Participate in local community activities and share information about the early childhood profession	Communicate effectively as a speaker and writer, providing information about services and policies that affect young children and their families	Participate in the broader professional community and mentor other staff by providing opportunities for them to participate in regional or statewide councils that advocate high quality services and programs for young children and their families
3.2 Understanding Professional Advocacy	Be aware of state and local policies that affect children and families and work in the community to promote positive change	Promote quality in program regulation and other services for young children and their families	Identify community needs that affect children and advocate for programs and services to promote accessible and affordable quality services for children and their families to address those needs	Provide leadership in identifying community needs that affect children and in advocating for programs and services to promote accessible and affordable quality services for children and their families

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
4. Ethics				
4.1 Ethics in Communications and Interactions	Abide by the professional code of ethics for early childhood care and education that prohibits interacting in any way that is physically or emotionally harmful, disrespectful, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children and their families	Demonstrate ethical behavior by following all applicable early childhood care and education regulations and adhering to a professional code of ethics Engage in study or discussions that provide a conceptual and structural basis for analyzing ethical issues and making informed choices when confronting ethical dilemmas	Articulate and use a professional code of ethics and be able to explain its relevance and importance to new practitioners and to the general public	Nurture other professionals in their articulation and use of professional code of ethics Initiate and mediate group problem solving of ethical dilemmas
4.2 Ethics Pertaining to Confidentiality	Behave ethically, protecting confidentiality of written and spoken information	Recognize potential violations of confidentiality and take steps to mitigate the situation	Model and help others acquire skills for appropriate protection and release of confidential information	Ensure that the program has policies regarding treatment of confidential information and share this with others
4.3 Commitment to Other Professionals	Advocate for policies and services that improve the quality of life for practitioners in the early childhood profession Recognize the physical and emotional demands of conscientious practice Develop strategies to maintain personal well-being and to provide support to colleagues in times of stress	Advocate for livable wages and societal esteem for early childhood professionals Nurture and support colleagues, assisting them to avoid burnout by finding ways for professional and personal renewal	Provide support to assistants/colleagues as they develop skills to advocate for policies that improve the early childhood profession Anticipate the strains and disappointments of the profession and develop services and strategies to support and preserve staffs' resiliency, commitment and effectiveness	Provide leadership for activities that demonstrate commitment to other early childhood professionals

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