

# Nebraska's Core Competencies For Early Childhood Professionals



## Knowledge and Skills Everyone Needs to Develop

### Level One—For Those Entering the Early Childhood Field

#### Vision for Nebraska's Core Competencies

All children have caregivers and teachers who are well prepared, knowledgeable and have the tools they need to advance children's learning and development

## Nebraska's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals

Nebraska's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals is dedicated to all adults committed to supporting the learning and development of young children through partnerships with their families and providing high quality early childhood programs, services and experiences.

### ***Introduction***

Core Competencies are:

**What *all adults* who work with children need to know, understand, and be able to do to support children's development and school readiness.**

In 2006, the Nebraska Core Competencies Leadership Team was convened to initiate development of core competencies for teachers/caregivers in the early childhood field. The Core Competencies Leadership Team was made up of early childhood education professionals from across Nebraska.

The Leadership Team met and agreed on a common definition for core competencies, defined guiding principles for the core competencies, provided some of the initial framework for what the essential areas of knowledge and skills the early childhood field needed, and provided guidance on the number of levels needed for Nebraska Core Competencies. Nebraska's core competencies are divided into six core competency skill levels. This booklet provides the knowledge and skills from level one, the level for those entering the field.

Nebraska's core competencies are divided into nine areas of knowledge and skill competencies. Each of the nine areas contains six levels that range from the skills and knowledge of a beginning professional to the more advanced skills and knowledge possessed by someone with a master's degree.

### **Vision for Nebraska's Core Competencies**

All children have caregivers and teachers who are well prepared, knowledgeable and have the tools they need to advance children's learning and development.

### **Purpose of Core Competencies**

- Define what early childhood teachers/caregivers need to know and be able to do to provide quality care and education.
- Serve as part of the foundation for Nebraska's professional development system.
- Help early childhood programs, directors and teachers/caregivers define professional development needs.
- Define the levels of competencies of the professional development system from entry level skills through advanced academic preparation and years of experience in early childhood programs.
- Allow professionals to evaluate progress from one level to the next through a combination of training, education and self-assessment.

## Nebraska's Core Competencies Are Voluntary

The competencies, skills, and levels described are voluntary for those working in the early care and education field. Programs, directors, teachers, family child care home providers and others are encouraged to use the document as they find helpful.

People might want to use them to help in making hiring decisions, writing job descriptions, assessing staff skills, identifying professional development goals, and designing training and in-service programs that can advance the skills and knowledge of those working with children. There are multiple uses for this document to benefit the early childhood field.

### Benefits of Having Core Competencies

#### A. Providers, teachers, caregivers, and other practitioners can:

- Evaluate their own current level of knowledge
- Identify areas of training/educational needs
- Determine training/professional development that can meet those needs
- Identify potential career paths they can pursue

#### B. Directors or administrators can:

- Specify levels of training/education for individual jobs
- Develop more completed job descriptions based upon the competencies defined for the early childhood field
- Help staff develop professional development plans
- Plan educational or training opportunities that will best serve the needs of the staff.
- Provide guidance for a salary scale based upon levels of competency
- Appraise job performance of staff

#### C. Higher Education faculty members can:

- Design courses to ensure students are able to demonstrate mastery of the competencies
- Coordinate content to facilitate transfer and articulation of college coursework

#### D. Trainers or training organizations can:

- Understand the knowledge and skills necessary for professionals
- Evaluate audiences to determine levels of knowledge and skills
- Build evaluation components into training to demonstrate competencies

## **A. Knowledge Area: Child Growth and Development**

- 1.1 Addresses the individual needs of each child
- 1.2 Helps children learn to communicate and get along with others
- 1.3 Recognizes that children learn and develop through play and meaningful experiences.
- 1.4 Recognizes and respects individual personalities and temperaments of children
- 1.5 Engages in safe, secure, and responsive relationship with each child to promote the child's optimal development



## **B. Knowledge Area: Health, Safety and Nutrition**

- 1.1 Practices effective hand washing, toileting and diapering, safe food handling, and safe sleep procedures to reduce the spread of disease and the possibility of injury to children.
- 1.2 Practices universal precautions to minimize and control the spread of disease through body fluids.
- 1.3. Has CPR/First Aid Certification or can readily identify the person in the program who has a current certification in CPR/First Aid. (If a Family Child Care Home Provider-must have CPR/First Aid).
- 1.4 Actively supervises children to ensure safety both indoors and outdoors and to ensure that children are released only to family or authorized escorts.
- 1.5 Selects safe toys, materials, and equipment appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the children in care.
- 1.6 Responds promptly and appropriately to children's injuries, documents any injuries and notifies families, while assuring the comfort and care of other children
- 1.7 Keeps environment free of health hazards

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- 1.8 Maintains an accessible current list of emergency phone numbers both indoors and outdoors for contacting families and emergency services.
- 1.9 Posts, regularly practices, follows and documents emergency and safety evacuation procedures such as fire, natural disaster, and tornado drills.
- 1.10 Encourages children's use of good oral health practices, wiping teeth of infant with clean wash cloth, using swish and rinse procedures for toddlers and/or encourages use of a tooth brush.
- 1.11 Follows instructions for proper giving of and applying of medication to children.
- 1.12 Understands the legal responsibility to recognize and report child abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.
- 1.13 Is familiar with all state rules and regulations pertaining to the specific type of early education program.
- 1.14 Follows staff-child ratio requirements in state regulations.
- 1.15 Pays attention to all children's allergies and health issues.
- 1.16 If transporting children, utilizes age and weight appropriate child safety seats and follows all federal and state transportation regulations for transporting children.



## C.Knowledge Area: Learning Environments

- 1.1 Provides equipment and materials that are clean, safe, and free from hazards
- 1.2 Follows a daily schedule
- 1.3 Arranges environment and routines to promote respect for materials, equipment and others in the room.
- 1.4 Arranges materials on child's level to allow for exploration and independence.
- 1.5 Observes health and safety practices in the environment.
- 1.6 Encourages children to participate in a variety of learning centers.
- 1.7 Limits children's exposure to TV, videotapes, DVD's and passive learning.

## D. Knowledge Area: Planning Learning Experiences and Curriculum

### *Focus: Social Emotional Development*

- 1.1 Engages in everyday conversations with children.
- 1.2 Encourages children to interact positively with one another.
- 1.3 Acknowledges differences and treats others respectfully.
- 1.4 Establishes trusting and caring relationships with each child.
- 1.5 Respects and incorporates family beliefs and customs when preparing learning activities.



### *Focus: Health and Physical Development*

- 1.1 Understands the value of play.
- 1.2 Provides time and appropriate materials for fine motor skills such as cutting with scissors, drawing, and playing musical instruments.
- 1.3 Acknowledges and supports children's natural tendency to move and be active throughout the day.
- 1.4 Provides time for active physical play both inside and outside on a daily basis.



### *Focus: Language/Literacy Development*

- 1.1 Reads age appropriate books to children both individually and in groups.
- 1.2 Respects and encourages children to retain the language of their family.
- 1.3 Talks with children and stimulates conversation among children.

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- 1.4 Engages children in stories, songs, and poems.
- 1.5 Model appropriate language, communication, reading and writing.

### ***Focus: Mathematical Thinking***

- 1.1 Encourages children to ask questions and actively listens to their responses.
- 1.2 Offers a variety of counting activities, number puzzles and books that encourage mathematical thinking.
- 1.3 Provides blocks of various shapes and sizes to encourage children to make associations and comparisons.
- 1.4 Provides activities that connect new learning to past experiences and events that expand learning.

### ***Focus: Scientific Thinking***

- 1.1 Encourages children to ask questions and listens to their responses
- 1.2 Provides children opportunities to observe the natural environment and their surroundings.
- 1.3 Models enthusiasm for self-discovery and exploration of nature and nature education.



### ***Focus: Creative Arts***

- 1.1 Encourages and allows time for spontaneous and extended creative play.
- 1.2 Supports creative expression including visual arts, music, movement, and dramatic play.
- 1.3 Encourages individuality including unique expression of ideas.
- 1.4 Values every child's creative spirit.

## **E. Knowledge Area: Interacting with Children and Providing Guidance to Children**

- 1.1 Shows respect for all children in all situations.
- 1.2 Cares about each child as an individual.
- 1.3 Interacts in a manner reflecting respect for self and others.
- 1.4 Provides appropriate supervision of children's play.
- 1.5 Demonstrates realistic expectations about children's abilities and needs.
- 1.6 Communicates acceptance and understanding in the context of guidance.
- 1.7 Treats all children equitably and fairly.
- 1.8 Addresses behaviors or situations, rather than labeling the child.
- 1.9 Avoids actions that would cause physical or emotional harm, including, but not limited to: corporal punishment; humiliation; yelling or name calling; teasing; criticizing children or their families.

## **F. Knowledge Area: Observation, Documentation and Assessment**

- 1.1 Identifies behaviors in children which indicate physical, social-emotional (affective), and cognitive (mental/intellectual) growth and development
- 1.2 Acknowledges that children develop at their own rates.
- 1.3 Assists with collection of information about each child's development.
- 1.4 Maintains confidentiality among the program staff and the child's family, regarding each child's observation and assessment.
- 1.5 Uses photos to make children visible in their space.
- 1.6 Displays children's artwork, or other creations in their space.
- 1.7 Is aware of signs of emotional distress, child abuse and neglect, and complies with mandatory reporting procedures for child abuse and neglect.

## G. Knowledge Area: Partnerships with Parents and Communities

- 1.1 Respects the family's role as the child's first teacher.
- 1.2 Supports and respects the diversity of families.
- 1.3 Establishes positive communication and relationships with individuals and families.
- 1.4 Knows and follows the rules of confidentiality.
- 1.5 Willing to learn about the IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan) and IEP (Individual Education Plan) process and working with a team of professionals to serve a child with a verified disability.



## H. Knowledge Area: Professionalism and Leadership

- 1.1 Enjoys working with children and has a positive attitude.
- 1.2 Demonstrates empathy for children and families.
- 1.3 Dresses and behaves in a professional manner. (Dress may be adjusted based upon the program activities of the day.)
- 1.4 Has dependable work habits, shows up on time, and completes activities as planned.
- 1.5 Is aware of a professional code of conduct for early care and education teachers and caregivers, such as *National Association for the Education of Young Children Professional Code of Ethical Conduct* and why this code is important to follow.
- 1.6 Knows, supports, and follows regulations and licensing standards.
- 1.7 Maintains positive working relationships with co-workers and other team members in the program.
- 1.8 Interactions reflect value for oneself and respect for others.
- 1.9 Demonstrates openness to different approaches and perspectives.
- 1.10 Is aware of professional resources for learning.
- 1.11 Actively pursues knowledge to improve practice.
- 1.12 Accepts advice and constructive criticism to improve practice.

1.13 Recognizes professional behavior in others.

1.14 Aware of quality early care and education.

## **I. Knowledge Area: Administration, Program Planning and Development**

1.1 Supports the mission and policies of the program.

1.2 Respects confidentiality of co-workers, families and children.

1.3 Processes payment of family fees or financial payments according to program policy.

1.4 Uses time and materials efficiently.

1.5 Implements the program-define curriculum as specified by the supervisor.

1.6 Is familiar with *Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines for Ages Birth to 3* and *Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines for Ages 3 to 5*.

