

## Critical Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals

The purpose of this document is to ensure that Ohio's early care and education professionals understand the critical core competencies of working with young children with disabilities and their families. These competencies were created by starting with the Ohio Core Knowledge and Competencies for Administrators, NAEYC Personnel Standards, CEC Competencies for Special Education Specialists and DEC's Recommended Practices and adjusting language, as needed, to fit our goal of a Birth – Grade 3 framework. The references at the end of each competency identify first the primary source, and then any other sources that address the same or a similar construct.

### **LAWS AND POLICIES**

#### Ethics and Code of Conduct

1. Demonstrates knowledge of the history of special education, early intervention, legal policies, ethical standards, and emerging issues related to children with developmental delays, disabilities, and special health care needs birth through grade 3. (CEC 6.1, DEC RP L10)
2. Models high professional expectations and ethical practice, and create supportive environments that safeguard the legal rights and improve outcomes for young children with developmental delays, disabilities, and special health care needs and their families. (CEC 6.2)
3. Continuously broadens and deepens professional knowledge and expands expertise with instructional technologies, curriculum standards, effective instruction and intervention strategies, and assistive technologies to support access to and learning of challenging content and activities appropriate to their role. (CEC 2.2)

#### Advocacy

4. Applies knowledge of theories, evidence-based practices, and relevant laws to advocate for programs, supports, and services for young children with developmental delays, disabilities, and special health care needs (CEC 3.3, DEC RP L5, L7)
5. Identifies opportunities and provide ways for family members to become involved in advocating for support of high-quality care and education and/or shaping public policy decisions related to childcare and education. (CKC Fam 3.2, DEC RP F10)

### **EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS**

#### Services and Supports

1. Ensures practitioners provide services and supports in natural and inclusive environments, and during daily routines and activities. (DEC RP Environ E1)
2. Ensures that learning environments and experiences are designed, implemented, modified, and adapted so that young children with developmental delays, disabilities, and special health care needs are able to fully and meaningfully participate along with their peers. (CKC Admin Curr 1.8)
3. Uses understanding of cultural, social, and economic diversity and individual learner differences to inform the development and improvement of programs, supports, and services for young children with exceptionalities. (CEC 3.2, DEC RP F)

| <b>EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS</b>   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4.                           | Works with families and other adults to use instructional and assistive technologies to improve programs, supports, and services for young children with developmental delays, disabilities, and special health care needs. (CEC 3.4; DEC RP E4, E5) |
| 5.                           | Ensures that materials and equipment that support individual and peer play are available in sufficient quantities to meet each child's needs and interests. (CKC Admin Curr 2.4)                                                                     |
| 6.                           | Demonstrates knowledge of the importance of choosing materials and equipment, and arranging the physical space based on specific learning and developmental needs of each child. (CKC Learn Environ; DEC RP E3)                                      |
| 7.                           | Demonstrates knowledge of the impact of supporting transitions to assist children and families. (CKC Fam)                                                                                                                                            |
| <u>Work in Collaboration</u> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 8.                           | Facilitates practitioners representing multiple disciplines and families work together as a team to plan and implement supports and services to meet the unique needs of each child and family (DEC RP TC1, CEC Sand 7)                              |

| <b>EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES</b>          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Supporting Individual Differences</u> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 1.                                       | Uses understanding of cultural, social, and economic diversity and individual learner differences to inform the development and improvement of programs, supports, and services for young children with developmental delays, disabilities, and special health care needs. (CEC 3.2)                                                                                                            |
| 2.                                       | Demonstrates knowledge of and supports the use of intervention and instructional skills that are responsive to the learning trajectories of young children and to the needs of each child, recognizing that differentiating instruction, incorporating play as a core teaching practice, and supporting the development of executive function skills are critical for young children. (NAEYC 4) |
| <u>Assessment</u>                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 3.                                       | Supports practitioners with implementing systematic ongoing assessment to identify learning targets, plan activities, and monitor the child's progress to revise instruction as needed. (DEC RP A9)                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 4.                                       | Ensures practitioners use assessment materials and strategies that are appropriate for the child's age and level of development and accommodate the child's sensory, physical, communication, cultural, linguistic, social, and emotional characteristics. (DEC RP Assess)                                                                                                                      |
| 5.                                       | Demonstrates knowledge of and supports practitioners using clinical reasoning in addition to formal assessment results to identify a child's current levels of functioning and to determine a child's eligibility and plan for intervention. (DEC RP Assess)                                                                                                                                    |
| <u>Interactions and Instruction</u>      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 6.                                       | Ensures practitioners promote the child's cognitive development by observing, interpreting, and responding intentionally to the child's exploration, play, and social activity by joining in and expanding on the child's focus, actions, and intent. (DEC RP Inter)                                                                                                                            |
| 7.                                       | Demonstrates knowledge of and promotes the use of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias, evidence-based intervention skills and strategies that reflect the principles of universal design for learning. (NAEYC 4)                                                                                                                                     |

| <b>EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES</b>    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8.                                 | Demonstrates knowledge of the effects of caring and consistent relationships with adults on attachment, self-regulation and pro-social behavior across all areas of development and learning (CKC Child Dev)                                                                                                     |
| <u>Environments</u>                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 9.                                 | Demonstrates knowledge of and supports practitioners use of Universal Design for Learning principles to create accessible environments. (DEC RP Environ)                                                                                                                                                         |
| 10.                                | Demonstrates knowledge of the need for a physically and emotionally safe environment to support a child's growth and development and the safety risks that change with each child's developmental stage. (CKC Health Safety)                                                                                     |
| 11.                                | Demonstrates knowledge of the effects of a responsive learning environment to support children's development and learning. (CKC Child Dev)                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <u>Making Curricular Decisions</u> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 12.                                | Demonstrates knowledge of and supports practitioner use of pedagogical content knowledge—how young children learn in each discipline—and how to use the practitioner knowledge and practices described in NAEYC Standards 1 through 4 to support young children's learning in each content area. (NAEYC Stand 5) |
| 13.                                | Demonstrates knowledge of and supports practitioner use of knowledge about the developmental period of early childhood, about individual children, and about development and learning in cultural contexts to make evidence-based decisions that support each child. (NAEYC 1)                                   |

| <b>WORKING WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Building Relationships</u>                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1.                                           | Provides families with up-to-date, comprehensive and unbiased information in a way that families can understand and use to make informed choices and decisions. (DEC RP Fam)                                                                                              |
| 2.                                           | Collaborates as partners with families in young children's development and learning through respectful, reciprocal relationships and engagement. (NAEYC 2)                                                                                                                |
| <u>Linking to Community Resources</u>        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 3.                                           | Establishes partnerships across levels and with counterparts in other systems and agencies to create coordinated and inclusive systems of services and supports. (DEC RP L6)                                                                                              |
| 4.                                           | Advocates for and facilitates strong collaborations between the early intervention, early care and education, afterschool, and K-12 education communities. (CKC Admin Fam)                                                                                                |
| 5.                                           | Coordinates collaboration between practitioners (e.g., speech therapists, early childhood mental health consultants) and childcare and education programs to provide integrated and/or comprehensive services to children and families in natural environments. (CKC Fam) |
| 6.                                           | Connects families to appropriate community services to assist in the child's development when additional help is suggested by the results of ongoing assessment. (CKC Admin Curr)                                                                                         |

## WORKING WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

7. Seeks external resources to support curriculum and intervention development, adaptation and modification in an effort to support the needs of children, staff, and families. (CKC Admin Curr)

### Values Related to Work with Families

8. Demonstrates knowledge of the effects of involving families in decisions regarding intervention activities and the educational goals of their children. (CKC Child Growth & Development; DEC RP F4)
9. Demonstrates knowledge of the impact of diverse family support systems on children, families and communities. (CKC: Family and Community Relations)
10. Demonstrates knowledge of the importance of developing a collaborative partnership with each family. (CKC Fam)
11. Demonstrates knowledge of the ways that child development and the learning process occur in multiple contexts, including family, culture, language, community, and early learning setting, as well as a larger societal context that includes structural inequities. (NAEYC 1c)

## SYSTEMS CHANGE AND IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE

1. Collaborates with stakeholders to collect and use data for program management and continuous program improvement and to examine the effectiveness of services and supports in improving child and family outcomes. (DEC RP Leader)
2. Develops and implements an evidence-based professional development system or approach that provides practitioners a variety of supports to ensure they have the knowledge and skills needed to implement the DEC Recommended Practices and Early Intervention Mission and Key Principles. (DEC RP Leader)

## LEADERSHIP

1. Provides opportunities for professional development to support and encourage staff's ability to design developmentally appropriate, integrated curricular experiences in the content areas of language and literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, drama, movement and technology. (CKC Admin Curr)
2. Works across levels and sectors to secure fiscal and human resources and maximize the use of these resources to successfully implement the DEC Recommended Practices and Early Intervention Mission and Key Principles. (DEC RP Leader)
3. Creates a culture and a climate in which practitioners feel a sense of belonging and want to support the organization's mission and goals. (DEC RP Leader)
4. Promotes efficient and coordinated service delivery for children and families by creating the conditions for practitioners from multiple disciplines and the family to work together as a team to systematically and regularly exchange expertise, knowledge, and information to build team capacity and jointly solve problems, plan, and implement interventions. (DEC RP Leader, DEC RP TC 1, 2)

| LEADERSHIP    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5.            | Recognizes the impact of stressors in the early childhood profession and how to develop strategies to maintain positive working culture, healthy professionals, and high-quality professional performance. (CKC Admin HR) |
| 6.            | Creates and maintains collegial and productive work environments that respect and safeguard the rights of young children with exceptionalities and their families. (CEC 5)                                                |
| Relationships |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 7.            | Demonstrates knowledge of the value of professional relationships and the value of each professional in building the larger community of early childhood practice. (CKC E)                                                |
| 8.            | Develops and implements policies, structures, and practices that promote shared decision making with practitioners and families. (DEC RPs Leader)                                                                         |
| 9.            | Supports practitioners to understand and use linguistically and culturally responsive practices. (CEC 5)                                                                                                                  |

#### Key Sources

Ohio's Early Childhood Core Knowledge and Competencies for Administrators 2015. <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Professional-Development-for-Early-Childhood-Teach/Ohio-Early-Learning-Core-Knowledge-and-Competencie>

Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators 2020. National Association for the Education of Young Children. <https://ecpcta.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2810/2020/10/Crosswalk-EI-ECSE-and-ECE-Standards-Final.pdf>

Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Special Educators 2020. Council for Exceptional Children. <https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-practice-based-professional-preparation-standards-special-educators>

Division for Early Childhood. (2014). *DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education 2014*. <https://www.dec-spced.org/dec-recommended-practices>

Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments, OSEP TA Community of Practice: Part C Settings. March 2008. Agreed upon mission and key principles for providing early intervention services in natural environments. Retrieved from [http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/families/Finalmissionandprinciples3\\_11\\_08.pdf](http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/families/Finalmissionandprinciples3_11_08.pdf)