



# Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Directors

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*“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.”*

*—John F. Kennedy*



## Introduction

The Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Directors was developed to supplement the existing competencies for early care and education practitioners. These new competencies are needed for effective administration of early care and education programs. They are based on local and national research, and drawn heavily from work done in several other states including Delaware, Pennsylvania, Kansas/Missouri, Illinois, New York, and Nevada. Similar competencies developed by universities and professional organizations committed to early care and education, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), were examined.

Extensive efforts were made to ensure broad-scale input into the development of the Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Directors within the Florida early childhood community. In addition to the guidance of the Professional Development Initiative Steering Committee, a core competency workgroup (utilizing teachers, directors, administrators, trainers, and other stakeholders) and several teacher and trainer focus groups assisted with director competency development. Input from other system initiatives within Florida (e.g., Inclusion Task Force, Frameworks Initiative) was also considered.

The Florida Core Competencies for Early

Care and Education Directors describes the additional knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed in a management role. Competencies are measurable and observable skills that are organized around Core Knowledge Areas, a set of content areas that defines what directors should know and understand in order to operate a quality program. Distributing learning across all core knowledge areas helps professionals build a balanced approach to providing quality education to children.

- Core competencies define what directors need to know and be able to do to provide excellent services and operate high quality programs for children.
- Core competencies provide guidelines and priorities for education and training programs to meet the needs of directors in the field.
- Core competencies establish a standard for directors in settings that serve children
- Core competencies support consistency among directors across the state of Florida regardless of the differences in their work settings.

# Florida Core Competencies for Early Child Care and Education Directors

The Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Directors are organized around six core knowledge areas. All of the competencies are relevant for continuing professional development as a director in this field; however, individual programs may not require a director to use all of the competencies. Acquiring knowledge about the core competencies can promote growth and development both for the director and for the organization.

## What are the Six Core Knowledge Areas?

### Core Knowledge Area 1

#### ***Organizational Administration and Programming***

Directors are role models. Staff members look to the director to set the course, to create the tone of the program, and to build the best learning community. Directors incorporate programming that is based on best practices in education, and they involve all stakeholders in program improvement.

### Core Knowledge Area 2

#### ***Fiscal and Legal***

Directors need to conduct the financial matters central to the program. Budgeting, cash flow management, grant writing, and fund raising may be required. Additionally, directors need a working knowledge of the many regulatory systems governing the operation of all aspects of the facility and the program services.

### Core Knowledge Area 3

#### ***Personnel***

Critical to program excellence is a qualified and motivated staff. The ability to hire, supervise, and evaluate employees is an essential component of the director's role. Creating a working environment that builds loyalty requires effective staff development, fair performance appraisal, and appropriate incentives and benefits such as career advancement opportunities.

### Core Knowledge Area 4

#### ***Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Exercise***

Keeping children/youth and staff safe and healthy is a fundamental requirement of any facility. The director's job is to ensure that policies designed to promote sound health, safety, nutrition, and exercise practices are effectively implemented.

### Core Knowledge Area 5

#### ***Family and Community Relations***

Programs need partnerships with families and with members of the community. Directors must know their families, advocate on their behalf, and build alliances to ensure that children and families have the opportunities they need to be successful.

### Core Knowledge Area 6

#### ***Leadership***

Leadership requires that directors see beyond the day-to-day concerns of program operations. They constantly help the program clarify its values and live its vision. They influence within and beyond their program, reaching out to the profession at large and the well-being of children in general.



# Core Knowledge Area 1: Organizational Administration and Programming

*Directors are role models. Staff members look to the director to set the course, to create the tone of the program, and to build the best learning community. Directors incorporate programming that is based on best practices in education, and they involve all stakeholders in program improvement.*

## Key Element 1A

*Administer an effective organizational structure*

- A1. Create an inclusive and diverse environment that values reflective thinking and an exchange of professional ideas
- A2. Establish effective communication and decision-making structures with program staff and other stakeholders
- A3. Employ effective skills in facilitating groups and social relationships, team building, and conflict resolution
- A4. Develop the strategic plan for the program and implement goals and objectives into daily practice
- A5. Integrate a code of ethics into practice, policies, and instruction
- A6. Model ethical conduct as it relates to the field and to the stakeholder
- A7. Use safe and effective technology for communications and program management
- A8. Develop targeted marketing strategies and materials using a variety of media.

## Key Element 1B

*Implement developmentally appropriate programming*

- B1. Develop and implement a philosophically sound curriculum plan based on principles of child development, best practices, and early learning and afterschool competencies
- B2. Design and implement effective instructional practices tied to desired outcomes
- B3. Evaluate the center and programs and use results for program improvement
- B4. Select appropriate informal and formal child/youth assessments and lead staff in using the results to guide classroom practices and instruction
- B5. Design and implement written policies for using appropriate, positive child guidance

# Core Knowledge Area 2: Fiscal and Legal

*Directors need to conduct the financial matters central to the program. Budgeting, cash flow management, grant writing, and fund raising may be required. Additionally, directors need a working knowledge of the many regulatory systems governing the operation of all aspects of the facility and the program services.*

## Key Element 2A

*Execute fiscally responsible practices*

- A1. Develop written fiscal policies and procedures following generally accepted business practices and basic accounting principles and that ensure compliance with applicable guidelines
- A2. Develop and operate within a balanced budget, as appropriate to the program
- A3. Prepare and present budget and business reports to appropriate entities
- A4. Apply concepts of budgetary projection, including sliding scale policies and fee policies
- A5. Develop a compensation structure and manage payroll, as appropriate to the program
- A6. Manage the purchase and maintenance of supplies, materials, and equipment
- A7. Manage county, state, and federal reimbursement funds
- A8. Identify available financial resources at federal, state, and county levels
- A9. Develop and implement a fundraising plan driven by program needs and philosophy, as appropriate to the program

## Key Element 2B

*Comply with legal regulations and standards*

- B1. Adhere to all applicable federal, state, and county laws, codes, and regulations as they relate to: confidentiality, child neglect and abuse, non-discriminatory practices, classroom ratios and class size, labor laws, Americans with Disabilities Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, cyber safety, religious exemptions, etc.
- B2. Comply with program policy, liability, and licensing regulations
- B3. Implement strategies for working cooperatively with regulatory agencies

*“I cannot teach anybody anything,*

*I can only make them think.”*

*- Socrates*





# Core Knowledge Area 3: Personnel

*Critical to program excellence is a qualified and motivated staff. The ability to hire, supervise, and evaluate employees is an essential component of the director's role. Creating a working environment that builds loyalty requires effective staff development, fair performance appraisal, and appropriate incentives and benefits such as career advancement opportunities.*

## Key Element 3A

### *Oversee Personnel*

- A1. Develop and implement written personnel policies that comply with applicable laws and regulations and align with best practices
- A2. Coordinate and administer benefits program for employees
- A3. Develop and maintain staffing patterns that provide consistency and continuity of care
- A4. Develop a system to manage and maintain personnel records
- A5. Write effective job descriptions using *Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners* and recruit personnel who understand children's unique qualities
- A6. Create a positive and proactive work environment that supports staff
- A7. Implement staff policies and procedures, using *Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners*, for recruiting, hiring, evaluating, and terminating staff

## Key Element 3B

### *Commit to staff development*

- B1. Incorporate a collaborative professional development model using core competencies that helps staff self-evaluate, set goals, embrace learning opportunities, and evaluate their growth
- B2. Use professional development plans to develop skills and use the information for retention, succession planning, and promotion/advancement on the career pathway
- B3. Develop a reward/recognition plan related to performance and professional development
- B4. Develop a plan for ongoing staff development based on the Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners
- B5. Supervise, coach, and mentor staff in a way that maximizes capacity and program quality
- B6. Support staff in their pursuit of various career pathways in the field of education, and share knowledge of formal and informal training and education possibilities to encourage their professional ambitions

# Core Knowledge Area 4: Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Exercise

*Keeping children/youth and staff safe and healthy is a fundamental requirement of any facility. The director's job is to ensure that policies designed to promote sound health, safety, nutrition, and exercise practices are effectively implemented.*

## Key Element 4A

*Maintain systems related to health, safety, nutrition, and exercise practices*

- A1. Evaluate the facility for adherence to county, state, and national standards
- A2. Adhere to health and safety requirements as defined by applicable state and local licensing regulations for children and staff and maintain necessary records
- A3. Develop and implement written policies and procedures to ensure a healthy and safe environment for children and staff
- A4. Develop and implement an emergency preparedness plan to include policies and procedures that address staff training, maintenance of emergency supplies and equipment, and the continuation of business
- A5. Develop procedures to ensure that state and federally mandated child abuse and neglect regulations are followed
- A6. Create or oversee menus that provide a variety of foods and comply with nutritional regulations and individual children's dietary needs
- A7. Plan and monitor a system for sanitary preparation and food service in compliance with all regulations
- A8. Plan and monitor a system to ensure healthy children through exercise

# Core Knowledge Area 5: Family and Community Relations

*Programs need partnerships with families and with members of the community. Directors must know their families, advocate on their behalf, and build alliances to ensure that children and families have the opportunities they need to be successful.*

## Key Element 5A

*Promote their programs and build alliances on behalf of children and families*

- A1. Develop collaborative relationships with agencies and access community resources to meet the needs of all children and families
- A2. Incorporate the cultural diversity of the community in comprehensive services
- A3. Design and use multiple strategies to communicate with and involve families in the program
- A4. Explore key issues, barriers, and resources for working with families and local schools to develop school readiness and transition strategies
- A5. Provide families with information routinely about their child's growth and development
- A6. Provide families with access to information on legislative and policy changes that affect early learning services

*“The real leader has no need to lead –*

*he is content to point the way.”*

*—Henry Miller*

# Core Knowledge Area 6: Leadership

*Leadership requires that directors see beyond the day-to-day concerns of program operations. They constantly help the program clarify its values and live its vision. They influence within and beyond their program, reaching out to the profession at large and the well-being of children in general.*

## Key Element 6A

*Influence their program, the community, and the profession to achieve excellence*

- A1. Articulate the program's vision, mission, and values, and create a culture built on norms of diversity, continuous improvement, and ethical conduct
- A2. Define problems, gather data and available evidence to inform decisions, and apply necessary skills to solve problems
- A3. Engage in self-assessment, set personal and professional goals, and demonstrate continuous learning
- A4. Actively participate in professional organizations
- A5. Implement strategies to advocate for public policies that support children and their families on behalf of all children and families

*"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.*

*The last is to say thank you."*

*—Max DePree*

# Key Terms for Early Care and Education Directors

**Best Practices:** Best practices are practices in programs for children that are based on knowledge and research; these practices promote optimum development and learning for children in cooperation with their families and are characterized as family-centered, high-quality, comprehensive, inclusive, coordinated, and equitable.

**Director:** For the purposes of this document, the term is selected to describe the role of the staff person or the team responsible for the day-to-day operations, supervision, and administration of the program and for planning, implementing, and evaluating.

**Practitioner:** A Practitioner is a staff person who works in the field of early care and education, inclusive of the various roles and positions in a program, who desires further training and preparation in a core knowledge area in order to improve performance in the processes and responsibilities of the job.

**Program:** A program is inclusive of various environments such as corporate centers, faith-based centers, community child care centers, family homes, and schools.

**Reflective Practice:** Reflective practice is the process of thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge of practice.

**Stakeholder:** Stakeholders are all people with a legitimate interest in preparing children for school and life.

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- Illinois: <http://www.ilgateways.com/coreknowledge/index.aspx>
- New York: [http://www.nysaeyc.org/credentials/pdf/admin\\_cred\\_Competerencies.Pdf](http://www.nysaeyc.org/credentials/pdf/admin_cred_Competerencies.Pdf)
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