



## **Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP) Guide**

Welcome to the KCCTO Individualize Professional Development Plan (IPDP)! This guide will assist early care and education professionals in developing their own plan for increasing knowledge and competencies.

### **What You Will Find in This Document:**

1. What is professional development? Why is it important?
2. What is an Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP)? Why is it important?
3. Why is self-assessment important to professional growth?
4. How do I complete a self-assessment?
5. How do I identify and set professional goals?
6. How do I track my professional education/training?
7. What next? Resources and support.

# 1. What is Professional Development? Why is it important?

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*A professional...  
is a member of a vocation founded upon specialized knowledge and skills  
is associated with specialized training related to that profession  
follows established standards of practice  
is responsible for following a code of ethics*  
(Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center, 2011)

The field of early care and education continues to evolve. As a professional in this field, it is important to continue to expand your knowledge and skills in order to be prepared to provide high quality care and support to young children and their families. The quality of experiences provided to young children contributes positively to their development and has a lifelong impact. Therefore, early care and education professionals need to strive for the best in themselves both personally and professionally.

While licensing standards and regulations provide the minimum foundation for care, meeting these regulations should not be the only focus of your professional development. Though licensing regulations provide the foundation for minimizing risk concerning the health and safety of children, professional development that expands on required licensing topics can increase the quality of experiences of young children in early care settings. Continued growth in knowledge and skills is essential to improving quality, and all caregivers and teachers who work with young children should have a strong understanding of child development, current research, and evidence-based best practices. Continued professional development positively correlates with the quality of the experiences of young children in early care and education programs.

So, what is professional development? Professional development is the process of gaining knowledge or skills from education. Some common terms used interchangeably for professional development may include in-service, annual training, conferences, workshops, college courses, or seminars. To be effective, professional development needs to be thoughtful, reflective, and guided by established goals.

**Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center. (2011). *Your IPDP (Individualized Professional Development Plan) Planning Your Professional Growth*. Retrieved from <file:///W:/KCCTO/WFD%202018%20RFP/AA%20RFP%20PLANNING/IPDP/Vermont%20IPDP%202011.pdf>**

## 2. What is an Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP)? Why is it important?

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An Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP) is a customized path to reach professional growth. An IPDP is a tool that guides an individual through the process of reflecting on his or her strengths and interests, as well as determining areas that may benefit from additional focus. The information gained from this process will provide the framework for setting individualized goals for increasing personal knowledge, skills, and expertise.

Effective IPDPs:

- evaluate current knowledge, skills, and expertise
- determine areas for further growth, through a process of self-reflection
- develop individualized goals
- document professional development and growth

As you move through this document, you will learn how to complete a self-reflection, set concrete goals, and track your professional development.

Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center. (2011). *Your IPDP (Individualized Professional Development Plan) Planning Your Professional Growth*. Retrieved from <file:///W:/KCCTO/WFD%202018%20RFP/AA%20RFP%20PLANNING/IPDP/Vermont%20IPDP%202011.pdf>

### 3. Why is self-assessment important to professional growth?

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Self-assessment is a key first step in navigating your career. It is essential to identifying areas of strength, determining areas for further growth, and setting the stage for personal and professional quality improvement. Regular self-assessment helps improve practice, which in turn improves the overall experiences and outcomes of the children and families in your program.

It is important to remember that self-assessment is not a test. A self-assessment does not demonstrate the mastery of a subject through right or wrong answers. Instead, it is an opportunity for self-reflection and serves as a starting point for goal-setting for future professional growth.

Your self-assessment should consider your knowledge and skills in the field of early childhood or afterschool care. A job description, performance evaluations, and past IPDPs can help you develop your self-assessment. However, it is important to take the time to take a candid look at your thoughts and feelings about who you are as a professional at the present moment. Being honest and giving yourself time to think and feel are important to this process. Only you can answer these and other questions about yourself as a professional, but a supervisor or mentor may guide you in this process.

## 4. How do I complete a self-assessment?

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Early care and education competencies or standards are important tools in the self-assessment process. You can use these competencies and standards to provide a foundation for your professional development that you can build on to continuously improve the quality of your care.

The following regulations, standards, and competencies are particularly relevant to Kansas early care and education providers (both early childhood and school age). KCCTO has provided self-assessment templates for each. Based on personal preference, job requirements, or other factors, choose which one is most appropriate for you.

- Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) licensing regulations
- Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential Subject Areas and Competency Standards
- Core Competencies for Early Childhood and Youth Development Professionals (Kansas and Missouri)
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Guidelines for Effective Teaching

Self-assessment does not end once you have reviewed regulations, standards and competencies for the first time. The self-assessment process should be continual so that you continually reflect on all aspects of practice as you grow professionally. Even areas that you previously recognized as strengths may benefit from additional reflection. For example, your practice could potentially be affected when:

- new families enroll their children in your program;
- new educators join the program;
- new ideas and thinking arise from professional learning;
- requirements or guidelines change

Any of these situations (or many, many others) could provide valuable opportunities for self-reflection and prompt you to create new professional goals.

There is no specific requirement for how to complete the self-assessment on an ongoing basis. Each provider will approach the process differently, depending on program type, personal or professional context, and the time available to complete the self-assessment. Ideally, a self-assessment should be completed and goals should be reviewed at least annually.

## 5. How do I identify and set professional goals?

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Now that you have completed your self-assessment and reflected on your knowledge, skills, thoughts, and feelings about yourself as a professional, it is time to set goals for your professional growth. Setting goals helps to give you something specific to work towards over a defined period of time.

Goals can be short- or long-term. This means that you can set a short-term goal that you work to complete within a few weeks or a month or two, or you set long-term goals that you work to complete within 6 months or even a year or more. When planning long-term goals, it is important to set regular check-points for yourself to ensure that you are staying accountable and continuing to progress.

Set goals that you are in charge of. Goals may be guided by job or training requirements, but setting goals that you are in charge of helps you take ownership and responsibility of the outcome. However, it may still be helpful to identify sources of support to help you be successful in this process.

Goal Setting Tips:

1. Prioritize based on information from your self-assessment. What did you identify as areas needing growth?
2. Think about short-term goals in relation to your current position (current job requirements, desired changes in practice, etc.)
3. Think about long-term goals in relation to future career goals (professional or educational progression)
4. Ensure goals are S.M.A.R.T.: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic/Relevant, Time bound
5. Tell others: identify resources or people (coworkers, supervisors, mentors, coaches, etc.) who may be sources of support as you work towards your goals
6. Celebrate your achievements!

KCCTO has provided a goal-setting template to help you begin thinking about how to outline your goals. If you feel another method of recording your goals might be more useful to you, feel free to utilize that instead. If you are having trouble getting started, this resource about writing S.M.A.R.T. goals may be helpful: <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm>.

## 6. How do I track my professional education/training?

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Throughout your career as an early childhood professional, you will need to complete initial and annual training as required by the program with which you are employed, state regulations, and national standards if you are a nationally accredited program.

The method you use to track this professional education/training will depend on what works best for you or on what is required by your place of employment. Some people prefer to store these certificates or transcripts in binders, file boxes, or filing cabinets, while others choose to scan hardcopies into an electronic portfolio or professional development system. Whatever method you choose, you should always keep copies of your certificates or transcripts in a safe place that is easily accessible. If certificates are sent to your place of employment instead of your personal address, it might be helpful to request copies of those certificates from your employer.

While tracking your previously completed education/training is important for record keeping purposes, identifying and tracking what future education/training may be required of you should not be overlooked during the creation of your Individualized Professional Development Plan. Additional education or training included in one or more of your IPDP goals may address:

- Orientation and initial training for new early care and education or school age care providers
  - Training topics are usually specifically called out by employers or state/national regulations
- Annually required training hours
  - Follow-up training that builds on initial training requirements
  - Focused on interest areas, identified goals/areas of growth, or perhaps KS/MO core competencies
- Initial CDA training requirements
  - Training should fall within the CDA's 8 Subject Areas
- CDA Renewal training requirements
  - Training should be related to the age group of the CDA setting and focus on interest areas or identified goals/areas of growth
- Head Start Performance Standards
- NAEYC Accreditation Standards
- NAFCC Accreditation Standards
- Caring for Our Children Standards

Use your self-assessment and identified goals to guide your selection of professional education and training experiences. KCCTO has provided several templates to help you start thinking about how to track your previous and future training. However, if you feel another method might be more useful to you, feel free to utilize that instead.

## 7. What next? Resources and support.

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### KANSAS RESOURCES

#### **Core Competencies for Early Childhood and Youth Development Professionals (Kansas and Missouri):**

[http://www.ks.childcareaware.org/PDFs/2011CoreComp\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.ks.childcareaware.org/PDFs/2011CoreComp_Eng.pdf)

**About the Core Competencies:** Core competencies are what you need to know to provide quality early childhood and youth development activities and interactions. The Core Competencies for Early Childhood and Youth Development Professionals (Kansas and Missouri) is a framework that defines the standards for early childhood and youth development professionals. They set the expectations for professionals who care for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-age children, and older youth.

#### **Kansas Department for Health and Environment Child Care Regulations:**

<http://www.kdheks.gov/bcclr/regs.html>

**About KDHE Child Care Regulations:** The purpose of the regulation of child care facilities is to reduce the risk of predictable harm to children while in out of home settings. Public regulation represents a basic level of protection for all children. Further, effective public regulation provides basic consumer protection. Regulations should serve as the base level for program operation. Base level regulation should not be interpreted as meaning "low quality". Programs operating below that base level increase the risk of harm to children which should be unacceptable by the state in its efforts to protect children. Base level regulation should be seen as a stepping stone to meeting more stringent standards designed to increase the quality of services to children (i.e. accreditation standards for child care facilities).

#### **Kansas Early Learning Standards:**

<http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/Early%20Childhood/KsEarlyLearningStandards.pdf>

**About the KELS:** The Kansas Early Learning Document is a document that provides information and guidance to early childhood providers and teachers, including early primary grade teachers, on the developmental sequence of learning for children from birth through kindergarten. It is a dynamic resource that providers and teachers will be able to use as they plan activities for and engage in conversations with young children and their families around early learning.

## **NATIONAL RESOURCES**

### **Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs (CFOC):**

<http://cfoc.nrckids.org/CFOC>

**About Caring for Our Children:** The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education (NRC), the American Public Health Association (APHA), and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) have created numerous standards-based resources to promote health and safety in child care and early education. In 2012, the NRC created a searchable *CFOC3* standards database for the Early Care and Education (ECE) community to access the most up to date content.

### **CDA Council for Professional Recognition:**

<http://www.cdacouncil.org/>

**About the Council:** In keeping with its goal to meet the growing need for qualified early child care and education staff, the Council administers the Child Development Associate® (CDA) National Credentialing Program. The CDA Program is designed to assess and credential early childhood education professionals. The Council recognizes and credentials professionals who work in all types of early care and education programs - Head Start, pre-k, infant-toddler, family child care, and home visitor programs. The Council sets policies and procedures for assessment and credentialing, publishes the Competency Standards and other materials used for CDA credentialing, and administers the assessment.

### **Division for Early Childhood**

<http://www.dec-sped.org/>

**About DEC:** The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children (0-8) who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities. DEC is an international membership organization for those who work with or on behalf of young children (0-8) with disabilities and other special needs and their families. Find additional details and membership information about the Kansas subdivision of DEC at: <http://www.kdec.org/>

### **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):**

<https://www.naeyc.org/>

**About NAEYC:** The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a professional membership organization that works to promote high-quality early learning for all young children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

**National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC):**

<https://www.nafcc.org/>

**About NAFCC:** Started in 1982, the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) is the only national professional association dedicated to promoting high-quality early childhood experiences in the unique environment of family child care programs. NAFCC works on behalf of the one million family child care providers operating nationwide.