

Module 1: Welcome to the Early Childhood Profession

Section B: The Early Childhood Profession

Introduction

Welcome to the early childhood education profession. The early childhood profession includes teachers, administrators, and a variety of other positions who work with young children and their families. Early childhood is typically defined as birth through 3rd grade. Early childhood education centers may provide care and education to children from 6 weeks to 12 years. In the state of Arizona, early childhood education programs are governed by the Bureau of Child Care Licensing through the Department of Health Services (DHS). This section will review the qualifications for working with children as outlined in the Child Care Regulations. You will also explore other career opportunities in early childhood education. Child care centers are only one of the career options for individuals interested in educating young children. This introduction will outline some of the basic responsibilities and training for child care professionals. Finally, you will interview your Center Director to learn more about the Center's Philosophy and Goals and your specific job description and responsibilities.

Learning Objectives

After completing this section you will be able to:

- Identify the Arizona Child Care Licensing Regulations qualifications for your job in the center.
- Examine the personal characteristics and skills of a successful early childhood educator.
- List 2 other career options in the early childhood profession.
- List 5 responsibilities of a child care center teacher.
- Explain the Program Philosophy and Goals of your new center .

Guiding Your Learning

As your work through this section, reflect on the various career opportunities available for individuals who work in child care and the wider profession of early childhood education.

NOTE: The information contained in these sections are partial summaries of the DHS Child Care Licensing Regulations, are not intended to replace or provide an official interpretation of the Arizona Administrative Code and Arizona Revised Statutes for Child Care Facilities.

Summary of Key Arizona Child Care Licensing Regulations

R9-5-203 Fingerprinting Requirements

All individuals who work in child care facilities must have a valid fingerprint clearance card that is given to the child care center administration. If the individual does not have a valid fingerprint card, a copy of the fingerprint clearance card application can be provided to the center within 7 working days of employment. Staff who do not have fingerprint clearance cards are not allowed to work in a child care center. Fingerprint clearance cards are issued by the Department of Public Safety.

ARTICLE 4 FACILITY STAFF

R9-5-401 Staff Qualifications

The facility director must be 21 years of age or older and has documentation of 24 months of child care experience, a high school or high school equivalency diploma, 6 credit hours of education in early childhood education, child development or a closely related field from an accredited college or university and a minimum of 60 hours of instructions from a workshops, conferences or other professional development training in topics related to early childhood education.

Alternate qualifications include 18 months of child care experience, a NAC, CDA, CCP credential and at least 24 college credits with 6 hours in course work relevant to early childhood education **or** 6 months of child care experience and an associate degree from an accredited college or university in early childhood or relevant field, **or** 3 months of child care experience and a bachelor degree from a college or university in early childhood, child development, or a closely-related field.

A teacher-caregiver must be 18 years of age or older has documentation of 6 months of child care experience, a high school or high school equivalency diploma, 12 credit hours (6 credit hours must be relevant to early childhood) from an accredited college or university. Alternative qualifications are an AA or BA degree from an accredited college or university or an NAC, CDA, or CPA credential.

An assistant teacher-caregiver must be 16 years of age or older and provide the licensee with documentation of current enrollment in high school, a high school diploma or high school equivalency, employment as a teacher-caregiver aide or volunteer for 12 months, documentation of education in child development, parenting, or guidance counseling, or a child care vocational program.

R9-5-402 Staff Records and Reports

Child care employees must provide and document the following information to the child care center administration: name, birth date, home address, telephone number, starting date of employment, name and contact information for an emergency contact, written statement of immunity against measles, rubella, diphtheria, mumps, pertussis and documentation of a negative Mantoux (TB) skills test or other tuberculosis screening test.

R9-5-403 Training Requirements

Staff shall complete orientation training within 10 days of the starting date of employment or volunteer service.

Each year all child care center staff, including Center Directors, must complete 18 hours or more of training in the following topics: child growth and development, infant growth and development (may include sudden infant death syndrome prevention) developmental psychology, language development, observation and child assessment, developmentally-appropriate activities, child guidance and methods of discipline(may include training on the appropriate techniques to prevent a child from harm or to prevent the child from harming others)developmentally appropriate activity areas, health and safety issues(including accident and emergency procedures, and CPR and first aid for infants and children, recognition of signs of illness and infestation, nutrition and developmentally appropriate eating habits, child abuse detection, reporting, and prevention, safety of indoor and outdoor activity areas, sun safety policies and procedures, program administration, planning, development, or management, availability of community services and resources, including those available to children with special needs; and

2.

- a.** A staff member who has less than 12 months of child care experience prior to employment must complete 12 hours of the training in their first year of employment
- b.** A staff member who has 12 months or more of child care experience must complete six hours in one or more of the training topics
- c.** A staff member who provides child care services to an infant completes at least six hours on infant growth and development on a yearly basis.
- d.** A facility director completes 18 hours of training and at least 6 hours of training must include management or business training every 12 months after the facility director's starting date.
- e.** All staff members must obtain first aid and CPR training that is specific to infants and children. CPR training must include the staff performing a CPR demonstration First aid and CPR must be current as long as the staff member works in child care. A copy of the front and back of the current cards for first aid and CPR must be provided to the center administration.

What are the Characteristics of Successful Early Childhood Teachers?

Individuals who work with young children require a combination of personal characteristics, temperament, beliefs about young children, knowledge of child development, abilities to interact effectively with young children, and skills required to plan and implement appropriate learning activities. In an article *Beyond the Journal*, Laura J. Colker identified the following personal characteristics of successful early childhood educators:

- Passion
- Perseverance
- Willingness to take risks
- Pragmatism
- Patience
- Flexibility
- Respect
- Creativity
- Authenticity
- Love of learning
- High energy
- A sense of humor

Best Practices in Early Childhood Education suggest that a teacher demonstrate the following skills:

- Show respect, courtesy, integrity and professionalism at all times.
- Provide nurturing interactions with young children that support their social/emotional development.
- Support learning in all areas of development (physical, cognitive, social/emotional and language).
- Believe in each child as a unique individual and understand that children have different learning styles.
- Recognize children require guidance, support, acceptance and approval.
- Build a partnership with families based on respect, confidentiality and empathy.
- Understand the theories and practices of early childhood education.
- Believe that young children need to actively explore their environment and enjoy learning.
- Understand children learn through play experiences.
- Have patience and a high tolerance for exasperation or frustration when dealing with challenging situations.
- Is flexible and has the ability to deal with change and unexpected events which may involve a schedule change.
- Show respect for children, families and colleagues that includes the ability to take a different perspective and to compromise.
- Is culturally sensitive to the children and families in his/her care.

It is important to remember that as you gain experience and knowledge your skills will continually improve.

Areas of Knowledge for Early Childhood Education Providers

Working as an early childhood provider or teacher requires additional specific skills, abilities, knowledge, and dispositions that differ from parenting or caring for siblings. Early childhood teachers are required to have relevant experience and education in order to work with young children. As a professional educator you must have knowledge on the following topics:

- How children grow and develop (developmental milestones)
- How children learn and the differing, learning styles
- How to implement Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- How to create safe, healthy , and educational environments
- How to plan and implement developmental learning activities
- How to plan and develop an effective classroom, learning experiences
- How to select age- appropriate learning materials and equipment
- How to use effective, positive guidance methods
- How to effectively partner with parents
- How to be a professional in the early childhood education field

Teaching encompasses the following areas:

1. **Health:** Classroom cleanliness and healthy practices (examples: hand washing, diapering).
2. **Safety:** Providing a safe environment focused on prevention of accidents.
3. **Supervision:** Maintaining continuous supervision of enrolled children.
4. **Nutrition:** Providing healthy and nutritious snacks and meals.
5. **Communication:** Using appropriate communication methods with parents, children, colleagues and administrators.
6. **Planning:** A daily schedule of activities and routines that includes activities for small group, large group and individual children.

7. **Age and developmentally appropriate** activities in language, physical, social, emotional and cognitive areas.
8. **Observation and documentation** of children's development.
9. **Positive guidance** and appropriate child guidance methods.
10. **Learning environment:** Creating a developmentally and age appropriate learning environment.
11. **Parent communication:** fostering an open and honest relationship based on mutual respect for the child.
12. **Organized Classroom:** developing and maintaining a safe, clean, orderly, nurturing, and inviting classroom that encourages children's exploration of the environment and ensures children's health, safety, development, and learning.
13. **Teachers and Supervisor Relationship:** Maintaining collaborative and cooperative relationships with other teachers and supervisors.

Talk to your Center Director about your specific job responsibilities.

Child Care Programs

Individuals who work in the early childhood profession as child care teachers have a variety of diverse settings that can provide employment opportunities including:

- **Proprietary child care centers** may be owned by an individual or a corporation and provide full time and part-time care and educational programs to young children. Program ages may include infants (4-6 weeks) through school age (12 years)
- **Laboratory schools** are typically found on the campuses of universities, colleges, community colleges, and high schools and typically offer full-time or part-time programs for young children
- **Public schools** may offer Pre-Kindergarten programs for four-year-old children. In some cases the programs are free while other programs charge a fee.
- **Kindergarten programs** are typically part of elementary schools but can be offered in private settings. Some school districts offer full day kindergarten programs.
- **Head Start programs** are found in most states and in many communities. The programs are focused on children from lower socio-economic levels who are ages 3 to 5 and are free to parents.
- **Home-Based and Family Child Care programs** are typically located in the providers' home and care for a smaller number of children.

- **A parent cooperative preschool** is a program where parents participate though assisting in planning, teaching, administrative or facility maintenance.
- **Employer sponsored child care** is subsidized by businesses or other organizations and is viewed as an employee benefit.
- **Faith-based programs** are programs offering a curriculum influenced by religious beliefs.
- **Intergenerational programs** combine child and elder care in the same facility and are based on the concept of each generation learning from the other.
- **Before and after school programs** provide care and activities for elementary children. These programs typically provide transportation for children to and from elementary school.

The early childhood profession includes a variety of roles and careers in early childhood education including:

- Director of An Early Childhood Program
- Assistant Director
- Curriculum Specialists
- Lead Teachers and Teachers
- Specialization In Infant –Toddlers
- Preschool Age Programs
- Specialization In School Age Programs
- Assistant Teacher
- Family Child Care Provider
- Early Childhood Special Education Teacher
- Adult Or Parent Educator
- College Professor
- Early Childhood Education Trainer
- Coaches And Mentors For Teachers And Administrators
- Researcher
- Child Care Resource And Referral Administrators And Trainers
- Early Childhood Consultants
- Child Advocate

Individuals who choose early childhood education as their profession often begin their career working in a child care or preschool program and take advantage of the training and educational opportunities available to them. This initial orientation to child care is designed to present you with basic information to use as you begin working with young children. During each year you will be required to obtain continued training and education to enhance your professional development. This will give you the opportunity to increase your skills and knowledge. Taking advantage of training and educational opportunities is a good way to learn more about the field while gaining valuable experience in working with children. Talk with your center director about the training and educational opportunities that are available to you.

Arrange a time to talk with your Center Director or Center Trainer to learn more about:

1. Specific center philosophy and goals.
2. Your specific responsibilities and job description.
3. Specific center training and professional development opportunities that are available.

Applying Your Knowledge

How does the information presented in this section affect your work with young children?

The early childhood field offers numerous opportunities to make a difference in the lives of young children and in the lives of the individuals who work in the field. Teachers are the major factor in creating the developmental and learning experiences that influence young children throughout their life. Whether you are beginning your first job in early childhood education or are a veteran teacher, reflecting on the characteristics of effective teachers can guide your practice. Training and professional development are an important part in improving your knowledge and abilities in early childhood education. As you gain experience and knowledge the children in your care are the beneficiaries.

Check for Understanding

- ✓ List the Arizona Child Care Licensing Regulations that detail the requirements for your child care center position.
- ✓ What characteristics and skills do you possess that will help you be successful in the Early Childhood Education profession?
- ✓ Name two other careers in the early childhood profession.
- ✓ List 5 responsibilities of a child care center teacher.
- ✓ State the philosophy of your early childhood program.
- ✓ List job responsibilities included in your job description.

Resources

AZDHS Licensing Forms: <http://www.azdhs.gov/als/childcare/providers/forms.htm#section02>

Staff Qualifications: http://azdhs.gov/als/childcare/documents/providers/forms/staff_qualification_guidelines.pdf

Twelve Characteristics of Effective Early Childhood Teachers by Laura J. Colker,
http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200803/BTJ_Colker.pdf

References

Arizona Department of Health Services, Bureau of Child Care Licensing, Arizona Administrative Code and Revised Statutes for Child Care Facilities

[Twelve Characteristics of Effective Early Childhood Teachers](#) Laura J. Colker *Beyond the Journal: Young Children on the Web*, March, 2008. Retrieved from http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200803/BTJ_Colker.pdf

Caregivers of Quality, by Sally Cartwright, in *Child Care Exchange* p. 18-20, March-April 1998.

Module 1-Section B Worksheet

List the requirements for your position as stated in the Arizona Child Care Licensing Regulations:

List 5 responsibilities of an early childhood professional/teacher:

- | | | | |
|----|-------|----|-------|
| 1. | _____ | 2. | _____ |
| 3. | _____ | 4. | _____ |
| 5. | _____ | | _____ |

What characteristics and skills do you possess that will make you successful in your new position?

State the philosophy of your early childhood education program

List five duties on your job description:

- | | | | |
|----|-------|----|-------|
| 1. | _____ | 2. | _____ |
| 3. | _____ | 4. | _____ |
| 5. | _____ | | _____ |