Arkansas Early Childhood

Individual Professional Development Plan

TAPP

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Introduction

Welcome to the Arkansas Professional Development System! This document will be your guide to creating your own plan for increasing your knowledge and skills as an early care and education professional. Before you get started, read through the entire guide so you will have a good idea of how the process works. Then give yourself plenty of time to think about what you have accomplished in the past, and where you want to go from here.

What is professional development?

What comes to mind when you hear the words "professional development"? Many of us automatically think of the workshops and conferences we attend. While those are definitely important forms of professional development, there are other things that can help you grow as an early care and education practitioner. Obtaining a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is a form of professional development, as is enrolling in college-level classes to work towards an associate, bachelor's, or master's degree. Receiving technical assistance or coaching from an experienced mentor can also be considered professional development. Any activity that helps you increase your knowledge and skills in ways that help you grow personally and professionally is considered professional development.

What is an Individual Professional Development Plan?

There are many choices available when considering professional development opportunities. So many choices in fact, that it can almost seem overwhelming as you decide which workshops and trainings to attend. An **Individual Professional Development Plan** (IPDP) can serve as a guide to help you organize your ideas about how you want to grow professionally and how you are going to accomplish that growth. An IPDP will help you think about the following things:

- **How do I want to grow personally to be more effective in my job?**
  This may be the most important thing to consider when setting goals for your professional growth. An IPDP will help you identify your strengths as well as the areas in which you want to grow and learn more.
- **What information would help me work more effectively with a specific child, family, or group of children?**
  Often you will encounter a particular need within a group of children. Having a specific goal related to this need on your IPDP can give you a timeline to quickly focus on resources, learn about that need, and apply what you have learned to your situation.
- **How can my personal goals help my program be more effective as a whole?**
  Sometimes a school or center as a whole has program-wide goals. An IPDP can also incorporate those goals as part of your plan.

How does the Individual Professional Development Plan work?

Step 1: Self-Assessment

A good professional development plan starts with a self-assessment. A self-assessment gives you an opportunity to think about the areas of your job in which you already have knowledge and skills, and the areas about which you would like to learn more.

Step 2: Determine Priorities and Set Goals

Once you have completed a self-assessment, determine which areas of your job are the most important to you right now. Set goals for learning and strengthening your skills in those areas.

Step 3: Create the Plan

A professional development plan allows you to create a time frame for working on your goals and gives you the opportunity to think about what resources you will need to accomplish them. It also allows you to create regular check-in points with a supervisor or mentor and an opportunity to reflect on your work in completing your professional goals.

Step 1: Self-Assessment

Self-Reflection

Professional development is a lot like a road trip. In order to get anywhere, you have to know two things: where you are and where you are going. If you know those two things, you can plan your route. Take a few minutes to think about where you are and where you want to go. This will determine the route you take to get there.

I currently work with:
- ☐ Young Infants (birth to 8 months)
- ☐ Mobile Infants (8-18 months)
- ☐ Toddlers (18-36 months)
- ☐ 3-year olds
- ☐ 4-year olds
- ☐ 5-year olds
- ☐ School-age children (6-12 years)
- ☐ Adults

I would like to work with _____ in the future.

My current position is:
- ☐ Lead Teacher
- ☐ Assistant Teacher/Paraprofessional
- ☐ Floater
- ☐ Administrator (owner/director/site supervisor)
- ☐ Support Staff (secretary, kitchen staff)
- ☐ Trainer/Consultant/Coach
- ☐ Other _____

I would like to be a _____ in the future.

I currently have a:
- ☐ High School Diploma
- ☐ Child Development Associate (CDA)
- ☐ Associate Degree
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Doctorate

I would like to earn my _____ in the future.

I have a lot of experience with:

_____
_____
_____
_____

I know a lot about:

_____
_____
_____
_____

I am interested in:

_____
_____
_____
_____

I would like to strengthen:

_____
_____
_____
_____

I want to learn more about:

_____
_____
_____
_____

The Arkansas Key Content Areas

Everyone has strengths in different areas of their work with young children and families. Your strengths may be in areas in which you have had a lot of training or experience, have an interest or curiosity, or feel you have a natural talent or ability.

Eight **Key Content Areas** guide professional development for early care and education practitioners in Arkansas. These Key Content Areas define what early care and education professionals should know and understand in order to provide quality experiences for children, regardless of the setting in which care and education occurs. Each Key Content Area is broken down into a list of "competencies" for Foundation, Intermediate, and Advanced level practitioners that better define those things that early care and education professionals should know and understand.

The Arkansas Key Content Areas are:

Child Growth and Development

Learning Environment and Curriculum

Positive Interactions and Guidance

Family and Community

Child Observation and Assessment

Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Professional Development and Leadership

Program Planning and Management

A copy of the full Key Content Areas and Core Competencies document is available for download on the TAPP Registry website. There are descriptions of each competency area in this document which you may find helpful when completing the chart for each Key Content Area.

The next few pages will provide you with a look at the eight Key Content Areas and give you a chance to think about your strengths, knowledge and experience in each area. For each Key Content Area you have been given a chart that allows you to record your thoughts on your strengths and knowledge for each competency, as well as the competencies about which you would like to learn more. For each competency, you will determine your level of knowledge.

- **Awareness** – You have heard the information before, but are not clear on the meaning.
- **Understanding** – You understand the information but would be uncomfortable explaining it to others.
- **Describe/explain and give examples** – You fully understand the information and could easily explain it to someone else, giving specific examples.
- **Use often to guide work** – You have a deep understanding of the information and use it regularly to guide your daily work with children and families.
- **Interested in learning more** – You may check this box for any area, regardless of your level of knowledge. No matter how much you know about a topic, there is always more to learn.

Not all sections of the self-assessment may apply to you at this time. You may feel you do not have particular strengths and knowledge in an area, but because of your specific position within your program you do not need professional growth in that area right now. Everyone's needs are different!

The following page contains an example of how you might complete the self-assessment. The actual self-assessment begins on page 8.

Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Establish and maintain an environment that ensures children's healthy development, safety, and nourishment.

	Awareness	Understanding	Describe/explain and give examples	Use often in daily work	**Interested in learning more**
Knowledge of Regulations		X			X
Health				X	
Safety				X	
Nutrition			X		X

NOTES

I have had lots of training on health and safety and feel like I do a good job keeping the children safe.

I am interested in learning more about nutrition for young children. I see a lot of families struggling to provide healthy meals at home and want to help them. I also want to keep children healthy and fight childhood obesity.

Child Growth and Development

Understand how children acquire language and creative expression and develop physically, cognitively, and socially.

	Awareness	Understanding	Describe/explain and give examples	Use often in daily work	Interested in learning more
Developmental areas (domains)					
Typical growth and stages of development					
Delayed development or areas of concern					
Value and benefits of play					
Children's individual needs and differences					
Children's cultural differences					

Notes

Learning Environment and Curriculum

Establish an environment that provides learning experiences that meet each child's needs, capabilities, and interests

	Awareness	Understanding	Describe/explain and give examples	Use often in daily work	**Interested in learning more**
Planning Framework					
5Wj]hrD`Ubg					
Daily Schedule					
Transitions					
Learning materials					
Physical Development & Health					
Social-Emotional Development					
Science					
Math					
Language and Literacy					
Creative Development					

Notes

Positive Interactions and Guidance

Establish supportive relationships with children and guide them as individuals and as a part of a group.

	Awareness	Understanding	Describe/explain and give examples	Use often in daily work	Interested in learning more
Relationships with Individual Children					
Developmentally Appropriate Guidance					
Managing Groups					
Managing the Environment					
Relationship with others					

Notes

Family and Community

Work collaboratively with families and agencies/organizations to meet children's needs and to encourage the community's involvement with early care and education.

	Awareness	Understanding	Describe/explain and give examples	Use often in daily work	Interested in learning more
Respect for Families					
Child and Family Relationships					
Community Resources to Support Families					
Family/Parent Involvement					
Positive Communication					
Respect for Diversity					
Collaboration					
Reciprocal Relationships					

Notes

Child Observation and Assessment

Observe and assess what children know and can do in order to provide curriculum that meets their developmental and learning needs.

	Awareness	Understanding	Describe/explain and give examples	Use often in daily work	**Interested in learning more**
Observation and Assessment					
Children with Special Needs					

Notes

Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Establish and maintain an environment that ensures children's healthy development, safety, and nourishment.

	Awareness	Understanding	Describe/explain and give examples	Use often in daily work	Interested in learning more
Knowledge of Regulations					
Health					
Safety					
Nutrition					

Notes

Professional Development and Leadership

Serve children and families in a professional manner and participate in the community as a representative of early childhood care and education.

	Awareness	Understanding	Describe/explain and give examples	Use often in daily work	Interested in learning more
Ethical Standards and Professional Guidelines					
Continuous Collaborative Learning					
Reflective Practices					
Advocacy					

Notes

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Program Planning and Management

Establish, implement, and evaluate an early care and education program.

	Awareness	Understanding	Describe/explain and give examples	Use often in daily work	Interested in learning more
Organizational Management					
Personnel Management					
Resource Management					

Notes

Step 2: Determine Priorities and Set Goals

Now that you have thought more about your knowledge and experiences in the eight Key Content Areas, hopefully you have identified both areas of strength and areas in which you would like to grow.

The next step is to determine your priorities and think about setting your first professional development goals for the immediate future.

Sharing this process with a mentor or your supervisor can be helpful. Talking through your priorities and goals with another person helps you focus on what you want to accomplish first.

Determine Your Priorities

The first step in determining your professional development priorities is to answer this question:

> *What job-related topics have been on my mind recently?*

For example, you may have been thinking a lot about how to help a child in your toddler program who has been biting other children lately. Or it may be the beginning of a new year and you are interested in trying some new math curriculum ideas with your preschoolers. Or maybe you are a child care center director and want to attend training on budgeting and finances.

A job-related topic you are interested in could also be part of a program-wide improvement plan, such as learning more about an item in one of the environment rating scales or participating in the Better Beginnings program.

Look back at the self-assessment on the previous pages. Most likely, the Key Content Areas you were interested in learning more about will relate to some of the topics that have been on your mind. Jot down your thoughts in the space below. This will help you decide what areas are most important to you right now.

On My Mind

Related Key Content Areas

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A Guide to Setting Goals

The self-assessment is a list of professional development priorities – a place for you to start as you set your first professional development goals on your Individual Professional Development Plan.

There are a few things to keep in mind before you set your first professional development goals:

Make sure your goals are **specific.** For example, the goal "Learn more about math activities for my classroom" can be considered a very general goal. It may be hard for you or your supervisor to really know when you've accomplished your goal. But when a goal is more specific, it is much easier to know when the goal has been accomplished. For example, "Add materials to my math area to help children learn number concepts such as ordering, comparing, and counting" is a more specific goal. Specific goals can also be broken down into "objectives" such as:

- Investigate how children learn number concepts such as ordering, counting, and comparing.
- Investigate what types of learning materials can best help children learn number concepts.

Make sure your goals are **realistic.** Achieving your professional development goals often will depend on the availability of resources, such as books, materials, money, or training. Making sure you can realistically access the resources you need to achieve your goal in an appropriate amount of time is an important part of success.

Make sure your goals are connected to a **time frame.** Sometimes goals are never reached because there is no time frame in place for completing them. Creating a time frame that includes check-in points to track your progress will help you focus on the specific activities you will be working on to reach each goal in your plan.

What Are Your Goals?

Now it's time to set some professional development goals for the coming year. Think about what you would like to focus on first and what you would like to accomplish in the coming year. Consider everything you have learned so far: areas that need strengthening, areas of interest, current issues or topics that are on your mind, and your professional priorities. Use this information to guide you.

Write each of your goals in the boxes below. You may have anywhere from 2 to 4 goals, depending on how big or time-consuming each goal might be. Keep in mind that we always want our goals to be **specific**, **realistic**, and attached to a **time frame for completion.**

Name:_____

Program Year:_____
(Ex. September 2014 – August 2015)

Professional Development Goal:

Professional Development Goal:

Professional Development Goal:

Professional Development Goal:

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Step 3: Create the Plan

On the next few pages, you will be creating your plan for prioritizing and managing your professional development experiences for the year. The plan is divided into four parts to help you organize your ideas and activities. Read over the next few pages and then get started creating your own plan!

Choose Your First Goal

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you decide where to start:

- You may not be able to address all your professional goals in one year. Prioritize and choose a goal that means the most to your current position or future plans. Your director, a professional development advisor, or another mentor can be a great resource to help with this.
- If you have one goal that is specific but large and possibly overwhelming, consider breaking it down into smaller goals that each contribute to how you want to grow professionally.
- While it is usually best to focus on one goal at a time, it is possible to plan growth in more than one area over the course of your target year. You could have one large goal with a longer time frame and an extremely specific, small, high priority goal that fit into your professional development activities at the same time.

Create a Time Frame

Remember that connecting a professional development goal to a time frame for completion is an important part of being successful in your work. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you think about the time you have to work on your goals:

- Decide when to begin each goal during the year. As you work through different activities and trainings for your goals, this may change. You may choose to plan for one goal at a time, completing each goal before moving on to the next one.
- As we mentioned above, you may choose to start more than one goal at a time, depending on the time and resources needed for each goal. Keep in mind that each goal may require a different amount of time to complete.
- For each goal, schedule check-in dates. Meet with your supervisor or mentor to discuss your progress and address any challenges you are having. The number of check-in dates will depend on the overall length of time you need to complete your goal.
- Set a target date for completing your professional development goal. Again, your timeline may change as you progress through your professional development experiences.

Identify Resources and Experiences

As you begin thinking about how to accomplish your professional goals, it will be important to identify the resources and experiences that can help you along your way. Listed below are a few ideas to get you started.

- **TAPP Registry Training Opportunities.** This website is connected to the TAPP Registry database of all registered trainings occurring in Arkansas. The current website is http://professionalregistry.astate.edu/train_register/trainsearch.asp

- **Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education Resource Center.** The Resource Center is a lending library and resource center for early care and education professionals all over the state. A complete list of resources is available online, as well as an online order form to request free materials provided by the DCCECE. The website can be found at http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dccece/Pages/ResourceCenter.aspx

- **Child Care Aware of Arkansas.** Child Care Aware of Arkansas is a network of Resource & Referral agencies that operates statewide to provide families with information about quality child care. Each agency also provides training and resources to early care and education professionals across the state. The website can be found at http://ar.childcareaware.org

- **The National Association for the Education of Young Children.** NAEYC is the largest professional organization for early care and education professionals in the United States. The website is full of resources, both free and available for purchase, to help meet your professional goals. The website can be found at www.naeyc.org

Measuring Success and Reflection

As you complete each of your professional goals, it will be important to consider the impact your experiences have had on both you and the children with whom you work. Some questions to think about might be:

- How has working on this goal benefitted me in the work I do?
- What parts of this experience am I particularly proud of?
- How has my success with this goal benefitted the children with whom I work?
- What is the next step in my professional development journey?

My Professional Development Plan

Name: _____

Program Year: _____

(Ex. September 2015 – August 2016)

Professional Development Goal:

Tasks or Activities to Help Me Reach This Goal:

Resources to Help Me with This Goal:

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Date to Start:

Target Date for Completing my Goal:

Check-In With _____
Date:
My Progress:

Check-In With _____
Date:
My Progress:

Check-In With _____
Date:
My Progress:

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I Did It!
I Completed My Goal!

Some things to reflect on regarding the work I did…

How has working on this goal benefitted me in the work I do?

What parts of this experience am I particularly proud of?

How has my success with this goal benefitted the children with whom I work?

What is the next step in my professional development journey?

My Professional Development Plan

Name: _____

Program Year: _____
(Ex. September 2015 – August 2016)

Professional Development Goal:

Tasks or Activities to Help Me Reach This Goal:

Resources to Help Me with This Goal:

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Date to Start:

Target Date for Completing my Goal:

Check-In With _____
Date:
My Progress:

Check-In With _____
Date:
My Progress:

Check-In With _____
Date:
My Progress:

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I Did It!
I Completed My Goal!

Some things to reflect on regarding the work I did...

> **How has working on this goal benefitted me in the work I do?**

> **What parts of this experience am I particularly proud of?**

> **How has my success with this goal benefitted the children with whom I work?**

> **What is the next step in my professional development journey?**

My Professional Development Plan

Name: _____

Program Year: _____
(Ex. September 2015 – August 2016)

Professional Development Goal:

Tasks or Activities to Help Me Reach This Goal:

Resources to Help Me with This Goal:

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Date to Start:

Target Date for Completing my Goal:

Check-In With _____
Date:
My Progress:

Check-In With _____
Date:
My Progress:

Check-In With _____
Date:
My Progress:

I Did It!
I Completed My Goal!

Some things to reflect on regarding the work I did…

How has working on this goal benefitted me in the work I do?

What parts of this experience am I particularly proud of?

How has my success with this goal benefitted the children with whom I work?

What is the next step in my professional development journey?