



Maine Family Child Care Competencies



These competencies were developed as a collaborative effort of Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	3
Section 1: Introduction.....	4
Section 2: Purpose.....	5
Section 3: Use.....	6
GUIDING PRINCIPLES/CORE VALUES.....	6
Section 4: Maine Family Child Care (FCC) Competencies.....	7
COMPETENCY AREA 1: CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING IN CONTEXT.....	7
COMPETENCY AREA 2: FAMILY–PRACTITIONER PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS.....	7
COMPETENCY AREA 3: CHILD OBSERVATION, DOCUMENTATION, AND ASSESSMENT.....	7
COMPETENCY AREA 4: DEVELOPMENTALLY, CULTURALLY, AND LINGUISTICALLY APPROPRIATE TEACHING PRACTICES.....	8
COMPETENCY AREA 5: KNOWLEDGE, APPLICATION, AND INTEGRATION OF CONTENT IN THE CURRICULUM.....	8
COMPETENCY AREA 6: PROFESSIONALISM.....	9
COMPETENCY AREA 7: HEALTH, SAFETY, AND NUTRITION.....	9
COMPETENCY AREA 8: ADMINISTRATION AND BUSINESS PRACTICES.....	10
Appendix A: Glossary of Terms.....	11
Appendix B: Contributors.....	16
THE MAINE FAMILY CHILD CARE COMPETENCIES CORE WORK GROUP.....	16
THE MAINE FAMILY CHILD CARE COMPETENCIES EXPERT PANEL.....	16
References.....	17

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We would like to thank all the individuals and organizations who generously contributed their time and expertise in helping to develop the Maine FCC Competencies. For a complete list of contributors, see Appendix C.



Section 1: Introduction

The Maine Family Child Care (FCC) Competencies were developed to formally define and acknowledge the relevant knowledge, skills, and dispositions that FCC providers must have to promote the growth, development, and well-being of Maine's children and families.

Since FCC is substantially different than center-based child care, the core work group tasked with developing Maine's FCC Competencies began by identifying the unique aspects of FCC. As a distinct setting, FCC offers care and education for up to twelve children from a range of ages in small group settings, on a regular basis, in a family style atmosphere and often in a practitioner's own home.

Using these features, the group conducted a thorough review of existing Maine and national child care competencies and credentials. As a result of this initial research, the team looked to other states that had specific FCC competencies, such as Illinois, New York, and Rhode Island. In addition, the team also looked to the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (2019) released by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The combination of this research resulted in the selection of eight core competency areas that articulate what FCC practitioners need to know and be able to do to effectively care for and partner with children and families within an FCC setting. Most of the terminology used in this publication was revised and adopted from our current Maine competencies and credentials. Other key resources appear in the References that follow the Appendices.

The decision to use and expand upon the common language and definitions from Maine's current competencies and credentials was made to help advance a common understanding of what quality care and education is here in Maine. Although similarities are evident across the Maine Competencies, other credentials and competencies were not inclusive nor recognized the unique needs of family child care including caring for children of mixed ages, long-term caregiver consistency, as well as the distinct FCC role as a self-employed small business owner and hands-on teacher/caregiver.

The Maine FCC Competencies supports our professional development system with the ultimate goal of providing high quality services to young children and their families. These



Competencies represent the collective efforts of several key stakeholders, thereby ensuring they reflect the unique work of FCC practitioners and acknowledge those professionals looking for guidance in gaining knowledge, practice, and skill when caring for Maine's children and families or providing technical assistance to FCC providers and programs.

Section 2: Purpose

The FCC competencies were developed to acknowledge and promote professional workforce competence and the knowledge that practitioners need when caring for children and families within a family child care program. In addition, the FCC Competencies support statewide consistency and understanding of professional quality practices within FCC. The competencies are designed to accomplish this by providing family child care and Technical Assistance (TA) professionals with a research-based inventory of the dispositions, knowledge, and skills necessary to work effectively with Maine's children and families.

The FCC Competency Areas expand upon those required in all Maine Credentials to include additional areas in Professionalism and in Administration and Business Practices. These Competencies are specific to the skills and abilities required of FCC practitioners and small business owners. The Maine FCC Competencies are designed to bring recognition and encouragement of effective leadership, management, and quality early care and education within FCC programs.



The FCC Competencies have been intentionally developed to identify, acknowledge, and guide the preparation and practice needed by FCC practitioners to support the growth and development of children and families within Maine. Identifying and acknowledging the knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills needed to meet the FCC competencies benefits the program, the individual practitioner, and the families and children who are served by the program. Encouraging and having staff with advanced education and training provides another opportunity for practitioners and programs to market their businesses and commitment to advancing quality.

When FCC professionals have appropriate knowledge, understanding, and experience in specific subject matter of child development and learning, with skills and knowledge in developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate teaching practices, and strong professional, administration and business practices they can more effectively affect positive change for children and families and sustain and build their FCC business.

Use of Maine's FCC Competencies are intended for use by all FCC professionals working within the early care and education field in Maine and by TA professionals supporting FCC practitioners in their programs and professional development.

Section 3: Use

The following list offers some suggestions on how these competencies may be used:

As a Framework to:

- Provide continuity across early care and education sectors for FCC and TA professionals supporting the FCC workforce.
- Develop and offer foundational training for FCC professionals.
- Develop and offer a Maine FCC Credential.

As a Resource for:

- Individual FCC professionals as a self-assessment tool for personal and professional growth and to inform professional development plans.
- TA professionals as an assessment tool supporting FCC practitioners in their continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts and professional development planning.
- FCC business owners, to develop job descriptions, hire qualified FCC professionals and support reflective supervision.

As Guidance for:

- New and practicing FCC professionals.
- Planning, delivering, and evaluating evidence-based and high-quality FCC practices.
- Ongoing conversations regarding FCC in the field of early care and education.

Guiding Principles/Core Values

The following principles guided the process for developing Maine's FCC Competencies:

- Use evidence-based and best practices.
- Support interactions and relationships that foster self-reflection.
- Support and promote culturally competent practices.
- Reinforce family-centered practices acknowledging that children develop within the context of families.
- Define the knowledge and skills necessary for promoting the development and well-being of children.
- Inform practices of FCC professionals including licensed FCC practitioners, staff, and license-exempt care providers

Section 4: Maine Family Child Care (FCC) Competencies

Competency Area 1: Child Development and Learning in Context

1A. Understands the developmental period of childhood from birth through age twelve across physical, cognitive, social, and emotional, and linguistic domains including bilingual/multilingual development.

1B. Uses knowledge about each individual child's unique characteristics including developmental levels, learning styles, background experiences, culture, strengths, challenges, and approaches to learning when planning daily routines and activities.

1C. Identifies critical aspects of brain development including executive function, how children learn, motivation, and life skills.

1D. Engages in responsive, reciprocal relationships with babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and school age children/youth.

Competency Area 2: Family–Practitioner Partnerships and Community Connections.

2A. Understands that successful early childhood education depends upon family child care providers' partnerships with the families of the children they serve.

2B. Collaborates with families as equal partners in their children's development and learning through respectful, reciprocal relationships and engagement.

2C. Applies information about families' strengths, talents, culture, preferences, experiences, and expectations about child rearing practices and involves them when making decisions about their child's development and care.

2D. Responds to families expressed interests, challenges, and needs with information about community and cultural resources, services, and events.

Competency Area 3: Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment

3A. Understands the importance of using assessments to both support individual children's development and learning and to plan and/ or modify the environment, curriculum, and teaching.

3B. Uses assessments that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate (non-biased items) for the children being assessed and the purpose of the assessment.

3C. Uses a variety of formats to document assessment results to learn about each child, plan for a child's current and future learning and communicate with families in a family friendly way without jargon.

3D. Partners with families and when appropriate, other professionals to gather additional assessment information to develop individualized goals, curriculum plans, and teaching practices that meet the needs of each child.

3E. Maintains confidentiality in conducting, documenting, storing, and sharing assessment information.

Competency Area 4: Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices

4A. Understands that positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions are the foundation of family child care providers' work with all children. [1]

4B. Uses teaching skills and strategies that are responsive to and appropriate for individual children's ages, development and that are characteristic of the social and cultural family context in which they live.

4C. Provides a secure, consistent, safe base from which children can explore, experiment, develop relationships and tackle challenging problems that support their development. [2]

4D. Creates a welcoming environment that is predictable and organized with a selection of learning areas and developmentally appropriate, and culturally relevant equipment and materials that can be accessed by all children.

4E. Conducts informal child observation throughout various routines and activities in the day, records noted observations and uses this information to inform decisions about teaching strategies and curriculum implementation.

4F. Uses the principles of universal design for learning (UDL) to initially plan the environment and learning strategies to be flexible enough to accommodate the unique learning styles of a wide range of children.

4G. Uses positive guidance strategies for individual children and groups, such as supporting transitions between activities, modeling kindness and respect, providing clear rules and predictable routines, directing, and redirecting behavior, and scaffolding peer conflict resolution.

Competency Area 5: Knowledge, Application, and Integration of Content in the Curriculum

5A: Designs an engaging curriculum that supports children's learning in each content area and integrates this content into their play, projects, routines, and activities.

5B. Refers to early learning standards relevant to the state Infant/ Toddler Early Learning and Development Standards, (I/T MELDS) Maine Early Learning and Development Standards, (MELDS) and/or to the early learning setting to continuously update and expand their own knowledge and skills for curriculum development and the selection of materials for children.

5C. Recognizes that there are different ways that young children learn across content areas and that instructional decisions should be responsive to how children learn.

5D. Adopts or designs a curriculum that counters biases and stereotypes, respects child and family identity, fosters children's interests in the content areas and facilitates individual and group learning.

Competency Area 6: Professionalism

6A. Engages with the profession by participating in local, regional, national group activities and professional organizations. [3]

6B. Practices within ethical and legal policies and procedures.

6C. Adheres to standards of ethical conduct in working with children, families, and professionals, paying particular attention to issues of confidentiality.

6D. Follows relevant federal and state laws protecting the rights of young children including children with developmental delays or disabilities, such as the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

6E. Seeks opportunities to reflect on and learn about how their own social and cultural contexts and implicit biases may influence their practice and equity in their family child care settings as they strive to apply new knowledge about strengths-based, culturally, and linguistically responsive family engagement.

6F. Takes responsibility for their own well-being and has strategies to manage the physical, emotional, and mental stress inherent in their profession in order to be healthy and to engage effectively and empathetically with children and families.

6G. Uses and continuously updates their knowledge of early childhood assessment practices, curriculum frameworks, developmental, academic content knowledge, and related pedagogy to plan and ensure equitable access to inclusive environments.

Competency Area 7: Health, Safety, and Nutrition.

7A. Understands and follows licensing regulations regarding health and safety.

7B. Has written policies and procedures that outline what health and safety information is to be collected from each family and ensures that all staff members have been oriented in understanding a child's special health care needs.

7C. Develops procedures for daily health and safety checks of indoor and outdoor environments to ensure the safety of all children.

7D. Promotes good health and provides an environment that contributes to the prevention of illness and accidents through appropriate supervision.

7E. Practices, models, and assists children in appropriate hygienic techniques, including handwashing, tooth brushing, sanitizing, and cleanliness of the environment.

7F. Understands common health and wellness issues of infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and youth and integrates activities related to nutrition and physical fitness into curricular areas.

7G. Develops a collection of available resources on mental health, nutrition, health, and safety that are responsive to different cultures, abilities and languages and can be shared with staff and families.

Competency Area 8: Administration and Business Practices

8A. Follows effective business plans to apply professional standards in business ethics, legal and regulatory oversight, and administrative management.

8B. Maintains a system of financial business planning practices for tracking and monitoring income and expenses based on enrollment and operating expenses.[4] [5]

8C. Creates a formal statement (philosophy/mission) that describes their values and beliefs and the unique aspects of their program and guides the development of policies and all aspects of your program's operation.

8D. Creates, implements, and revises program administration and business practices, policies and procedures that support varied literacy levels, abilities, family culture and home language.

8E. Follows legal, ethical, and best practice standards, when technology is used for administrative and business practices, within the program for assessment and learning and/or when communicating with families and other professionals. [6]



Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Accreditation – A process that identifies that an early childhood program has met a specific set of quality standards such as the Council on Accreditation (COA), the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), or as defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; a federal civil rights law designed to provide equal opportunity for qualified individuals with disabilities, including students.

Advocacy – Families, organizations, or volunteers speaking or working on behalf of the rights, interests, or needs of others.

Assessment – A process of collecting and recording information through the use of multiple tools to gather data about current strengths, needs, and practices to determine the focus and goal for technical assistance and to measure progress over time.

Best Practice – Term used to describe any instructional technique, scientifically based practice, or method proven through research to be effective or valid.

Child Care – Comprehensive care and education of young children, usually outside their homes.

Child Development Services – Maine's system of early intervention and special education and early intervention service provision for children birth through the end of age five.

Code of Ethics – Core values of the field that provide guidance for what professionals should do when they encounter conflicting obligations or responsibilities in their work. (Examples: NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, Division of Early Childhood Code of Ethics, and International Coach Federation Code of Conduct.

Cohort – Group whose members share a significant experience at a certain period of time or have one or more similar characteristics; in this case, a group of professionals working towards a Maine Credential with guidance from a facilitator.

Community of Practice (CoP) – As a form of peer-to-peer technical assistance, Communities of Practice emphasize increased dialogue among professionals about professional knowledge and practice, with ongoing reflection and active inquiry.

Competency – Measurable skills, knowledge, dispositions, and abilities that practitioners working with children and/or youth need to facilitate learning and development linked to relevant guidelines or standards.

Competency Area (for ME FCC Competencies) – One of the eight broad categories in which the knowledge, skills and dispositions for FCC professionals are organized.

Confidentiality – A set of rules or a promise that limits access or places restrictions on certain types of information.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) – A process in which programs use data to identify areas of needed improvement and achieve program goals, participant satisfaction, and positive outcomes.

Credential – Documents certifying an individual has met a defined set of requirements established by the grantor of the credential; usually include knowledge and skills and may include demonstrations of competence through a portfolio

Culture – The unique collection of beliefs, practices, traditions, valued competencies, worldviews, and histories that characterize a group of people.

Cultural Competency – The ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures; ensures that the needs of all community members are addressed (<https://nccc.georgetown.edu/curricula/glossary.html>).

Cultural Sensitivity – The recognition that there are differences between cultures and that these differences are reflected in the ways that different groups communicate and relate to one another.

Curriculum – A planned sequenced set of activities and experiences based on the developmental needs of children that includes goals and principles, learning experiences for children, teaching strategies and environment.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice – Learning environment and teaching strategies that are based on current theories and research about how young children learn and develop and promote the optimum growth and development of children.

DHHS OCFS – Maine's Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services.

Dispositions – Values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward children, families, colleagues, and communities and affect both child and adult learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator's own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice.

Early Care and Education (ECE) – General term to describe the system of services provided to young children (birth – age 8) and their families including, but not limited to, center-based child care, family child care, in-home or family, friend, and neighbor child care, home visiting, infant mental health, early childhood mental health, Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Intervention and early childhood special education.

Early Childhood Education Professional Development – A continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with and on behalf of young children and their families.

Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) – Research-based, measurable expectations about what children should know (understand) and be able to do (competencies and skills) in different learning domains.

Evaluation Tools – Include surveys, questionnaires, focus groups; program evaluation is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about projects, policies, and programs, particularly about their effectiveness and efficiency.

Evidence-Based Practices – Approaches and techniques supported by research findings and/or demonstrated to be effective through examination of and reflection on current and past practices.

Family-Centered Practices – A way of working with families, both formally and informally, across service systems to enhance their capacity to care for and support their children. Family-centered practices treat families with dignity and respect; provide family members with information needed to make informed decisions and choices; actively involve families in obtaining resources and supports.

Family Child Care Association of Maine, (FCCAM) - An organization to unify, promote and strengthen quality professional family child care in the State of Maine. The goal of FCCAM is to achieve the highest standards in Maine's diverse legal family child care homes promoting the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development of children by enhancing the quality of family child care, strengthening, and expanding the family child care network.

Family Child Care Provider- A person who provides child care in that person's home on a regular basis, for consideration, for 3 to 12 Children under 13 years of age who are not the Children of the Provider or who are not residing in the Provider's home.

Family Engagement Activities – Meaningful activities and experiences that demonstrate reciprocal relationships between families and early childhood and/or out-of-school time program staff on behalf of children's learning and development; effective family engagement activities are fully inclusive of all family members and reinforce learning in multiple settings.

IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; an education act to provide federal financial assistance to state and local education agencies to guarantee special education and related services to eligible children with disabilities.

Indicator of Best Practice – An identified marker or benchmark that outlines methods that are based on theories and current research for effective practices that support optimal learning and development of children and youth.

Licensing – Requirements or regulations necessary for a provider to legally operate child care services in a State or locality, including registration requirements established under State, local, or Tribal law.

License Exempt Child Care Provider – An individual who is not licensed, certified, or otherwise regulated to provide Child Care Services. The license-exempt Child Care Provider must be 18 years of age and not be living in the child's home or be a member of the child's family.

Mentoring – is a process between colleagues of similar professional roles, with a more-experienced individual, the mentor, providing guidance and example to the less experienced protégé mentee. Mentoring is intended to increase an individual's personal or professional capacity, resulting in greater professional effectiveness.

MRTQ Core Knowledge Training – Denotes a standardized set of curricula covering the following eight core knowledge areas: healthy, safe environments, child development, developmentally appropriate practice, observation and assessment, guidance, relationships with families, individual and cultural diversity; and business and professional development. Delivered by instructors with a master's degree in early childhood education (or a closely related field) who have taken additional training regarding teaching adult learners and offers a consistent body of knowledge regarding best practices in early childhood education and out-of-school time for both new and experienced practitioners.

MRTQ PDN – Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network provides professional development services for early childhood and out-of-school time professionals throughout Maine.

MRTQ Registry – The early childhood and out-of-school time professional recognition system for Maine; tracks work experience, training, and education.

NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children – Membership Membership-supported organization of individuals who share a desire to serve and act on the needs and rights of children from birth through age 8 – <http://www.naeyc.org/>.

NAEYC Code of Ethics – A professional Code of Ethics for Early Care and Education Professionals serving children birth to eight NAEYC Code of Ethics and Statement of Commitment.

National Association for Family Childcare (NAFCC) – A national professional association dedicated to promoting quality child care by strengthening the profession of family child care.

Observation – The intentional, systematic act of looking at the behavior of another individual in a particular setting, program, or situation.

Out-of-School Time Settings – Any of an array of programs that provide children and youth with a range of supervised activities designed to encourage learning and development outside of the typical school day.

Peer-to-Peer Networks foster the development of relationship-based learning and support communities among colleagues, often in like roles. Peer-to-peer TA is based on the premise that a significant expert knowledge base exists in the field and that peers who have solved challenges on the ground have developed tools and strategies that can be shared with their colleagues.

Practitioner – Individual who works directly with children to foster growth and development and partner with families for the purpose of early care, education and/or intervention. Settings in which practitioners work include homes, child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, family, friend and neighbor care settings, and early intervention professionals and home visitors.

Professional Development – Continuum of learning and support activities, including the provision of education, training, and technical assistance, in order to prepare and enhance the knowledge and skills of individuals who work with and on behalf of young children and their families, *as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work.*

Professional Development Plan – Documents that provide a framework connecting various professional development experiences to each other and to the common core of knowledge and professional standards for early education professionals. Individual professional development plans are designed to create a holistic approach to building an early childhood professional's capacity and to ensure that individuals remain current regarding knowledge and practices in the field.

Professional Development Systems – Provide consistent and uniform standards for early childhood education (ECE) programs and guide implementation of high-quality services for

all children. The systems are designed to work across all sectors of private and public early education and care. Comprehensive systems address many areas of requirements and standards.

Quality for ME – Maine's four-step quality rating and improvement system, designed to increase awareness of the basic standards of early care and education, to recognize and support providers who are providing care exceeding those standards, and to educate the community of the benefits of higher quality care

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) – A QRIS is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, QRIS award quality ratings to early and school-age care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards.

Reflective Practice – The process of thoughtfully considering one's thoughts, feelings, actions, and experiences when applying knowledge to practice

Regulations – Rules or orders issued by an executive authority or regulatory agency of a government and have the force of law.

School-Age Child Care – This designation applies to programs that operate as out-of-school-time programming for school age children.

Training – A learning experience or series of experiences, specific to an area of inquiry and related set of skills or dispositions, delivered by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills.

University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies (CCIDS) – CCIDS is Maine's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service; has a statewide mission to build capacity and create systemic change consistent with the principles of inclusion, universal access, diversity, and social justice. The Center's work in the area of early care and education helps to expand Maine's capacity to support increased access and participation of children with developmental, linguistic, cultural and other diverse learning needs in quality inclusive early learning settings.

Appendix B: Contributors

Special thanks to the following individuals for their valuable contributions to this publication.

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