

## Professional Development in Head Start

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Hello. I'm Sharon Yandian, the training and technical assistance director from the Office of Head Start, and I'm excited to share one of my life-long passions with you: professional development and training.

From the very beginning, one of the smartest things the architects of Head Start did was to look to the community to employ the staff working with enrolled families and children. It was during these early days that Head Start administrators recognized the need to build the knowledge and skills of these newly employed community-based staff members by providing professional development opportunities.

As Head Start moved from a summer effort to a year-round program for many, the competencies required increased and training and staff development efforts expanded to include every role in the Head Start program. This required a systematic approach that emphasized improving quality services for children, parents, and families. It is an approach that still continues to this day; particularly with the moving landscape and regulations that prompt changes to qualifications, credentials, and competencies for staff.

Over the years, the Office of Head Start has continued its commitment to provide professional development efforts that are responsive to communities and that address the legislation and regulation changes necessary to run a Head Start program. The Office of Head Start learned from our many efforts that remain informed by research and evidence-based practices. One of the results is a knowledge base that supports a broad and comprehensive view of professional development and training for those working in early care and education. So that's why I am here. I begin with the question, "What is professional development?"

Professional development is the continuous process of acquiring new knowledge, skills, and abilities, along with experience and competencies that relate to one's profession, job responsibilities, or work environment. It encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities, ranging from pursuing and obtaining the CDA, college degrees to formal coursework, conferences, and informal learning that takes place while you are working. This is true whether you're a teacher, family service worker, or other staff member.

Strengthening the early childhood workforce, birth to 5, happens to be one of the Office of Head Start's priorities, and is a priority and goal that many of you are also realizing through creating and participating in well-planned and coordinated professional development systems.

To highlight this priority, the professional development content is organized in three broad, interrelated components: Professional Development Systems; Foundations for

Staff Development; and Individual Career Development. These reflect our comprehensive approach to professional development across Head Start and early education programs serving infants, toddlers, young children, and their families.

So how can you get the most out of the ECLKC's Professional Development pages? Understanding that these three components flow from the broader early childhood systems level to program systems to the individual is useful as you explore the information, resources, and materials available in the ECLKC Professional Development section. So, let's take a closer look.

Professional Development Systems address national, state, and local standards; registries; alliances; credentialing; and licensing requirements that inform the nature and scope of professional development. Foundations for Staff Development incorporate a systems approach at the program level. Resources reflect program-level requirements for effective staff development. Individual Career Development reflects a focus on the individual employee and his or her vision, goals, motivation, and approaches to learning. For the program facilitating individuals' professional and personal goal attainment includes providing long-term options and training programs.

So, as you can see, these three components are the framework used for organizing the professional development resources on the ECLKC, and this will help you target your searches for relevant information, materials, and training tools. We have pulled them together in this way so that it is clear what will help you immediately if you are seeking professional development opportunities or planning on providing professional development for your staff.

Lastly, one section that I want to highlight is the PD-to-Go and e-Catalogue. The Professional Development-to-Go, it's my favorite section. It includes content organized by topics and service areas. PD-to-Go offers ready to go, "off-the shelf" resources. This includes everything you need to conduct a session that addresses a specific workshop topic; for example, learning objectives, target audience, handouts, etc. So if you are a professional development coordinator, education manager, or consultant, this section is for you.

So, enough of my talking. We want you to get started exploring. We know that staff in our Head Start and other early childhood programs across the country do the most important work. We hope that some of these professional development materials will help you and others meet our collective goal of preparing children and families for success in school and in life. Thanks for watching!