



Getting Started Training Guide

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What is *Getting Started*?

Getting Started is an introductory course to help early care and education professionals get their careers off to a great start and make a positive impact on young children's lives. Participants will learn about responsive interactions, safe and effective environments, health and nutrition plus abuse and reporting.

This training satisfies the Department of Human Services' basic child care requirement for licensed centers, school-age programs, preschools, groups, family child care programs, and self-declaration providers. This training must be completed within the first three months of becoming licensed or employed. The Department of Human Services, along with licensers and other early childhood specialists, carefully considered the core knowledge that every early care and education professional needs for a good start.

Using This Guide

We highly recommend that this training be completed as part of your orientation process to give staff the foundational knowledge that guides your program policies and practices. The following outline provides you with information to align the *Getting Started* training with the policies and practices that may be present in your program. The outline identifies key topics within the training session to guide your discussions with staff, as well as suggestions for demonstrating the practices learned in the training.

This guide also provides information about the importance of professional development and gives you tools to help your staff become more engaged in their career.

Responsive Interactions | Children are happier and healthier when you, as their early educator, engage in responsive interactions with each child. In this course you will learn how to best support children’s development and learning with responsive interactions.

Responsive Interactions	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Understand why nurturing and responsive interactions are essential for young children’s development and learning- Describe the four ways you can “get in tune” with a child- Use the responsive process to build relationships with children
CDA Subject Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Supporting children’s social and emotional development
Early Learning Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Birth to 3: Social and Emotional Development- Ages 3 through 5: Social and Emotional Development
Core Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Interactions with Children

Overview

Relationships are essential for emotional health and well-being. They help you feel secure, accepted and connected to others. Children develop best when they have consistent, nurturing relationships with responsive adults. The relationships between you and the children you care for are the heart of early care and education. As an early educator, it is your responsibility to do all you can to support, guide and nurture the children in your care.

Caring for young children takes preparation. There are four ways you can prepare yourself to get in tune:

- *Study child development:* Young children constantly grow and change. Learning about their normal development will help you know what to expect at different ages and stages.
- *Get to know families:* In order to help children develop and thrive, you need to build partnerships with their families.
- *Develop self-awareness:* Your emotions influence how you respond to children. You need to be aware of your feelings and emotional reactions.
- *Learn the responsive process:* Paying attention to a child’s messages helps you respond in a way that truly meets her needs. Being responsive is a process that can be learned.

Discussion Questions

- How would you describe a nurturing relationship?
- What does it mean to be “in tune”?
- What are your hot buttons?
- What does it mean to be a responsive adult?
- Our inborn tendencies draw us naturally to some children and make them easier to get along with. How will you regulate those natural tendencies so that you can “get in tune” with all children in your care?
- Think about the “Watch-Ask-Adapt” process. What do you think will be the challenges of taking the time to intentionally think through and implement this process as you carry out your daily routines?

Review the licensing regulations, policies and procedures for your program related to this course

- Expectations for developing relationships and bonds with children
- Expectations for getting to know families and ongoing communication
- Policy for guiding children’s behavior
- Staff support systems for guiding children’s behavior

Demonstrate practices related to this course

- Create a work plan for getting to know the children on an individual basis
- Write a letter of introduction to families
- Create a work plan for getting to know families
- Identify hot buttons and make a plan for managing triggers when they occur

Safe and Effective Environments | Safe care is the first priority of any early care and education program. It takes both knowledge and constant attention to keep children safe at all times and provide them with a properly designed learning environment.

Effective Environments

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify the elements of an effective early care and education environment - Understand how the environment impacts children’s learning and development - Describe how to set up an environment that is responsive to each child’s needs
CDA Subject Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning a safe and healthy learning environment
Early Learning Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Birth to 3: Social and Emotional Development - Ages 3 through 5: Social and Emotional Development
Core Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning Environment and Curriculum

Overview

Environments matter! In addition to warm and responsive relationships, the environment is the most important part of your early care and education program. The learning environment for young children includes the physical space, both indoors and outdoors, materials and experiences and the structure of the day. An effective, responsive environment gives children the ability to interact safely with and learn from the space, materials and people in your program. Quality early care and education environments don’t happen by accident. Creating a supportive environment takes time, planning and reflection.

Children learn best in environments...

- Where they can have secure relationships with caring and responsive adults
- Where they feel safe to explore and learn
- That are based on an understanding of child development and individual differences
- Where families are respected and supported
- Where adults’ needs are met

Discussion Questions

- What type of freedom do you expect to have in setting up your environment?
- How will you instruct children on the proper use of the environment?
 - How will you introduce new toys and materials?
 - How will you teach the children to respect the environment and care for the materials in it?

Review the licensing regulations, policies and procedures for your program related to this course

- Licensing regulations relating to indoor and outdoor space
- Program policies regarding setting up and maintaining the indoor and outdoor environment
- Program policy for acquiring new materials and equipment
- Program policy for routines and structure of the day

Demonstrate practices related to this course

- Submit a floor plan of your current indoor environment showing your ideal layout. Be sure to include items currently in your work space as well as hopes for the future.
- Submit a floor plan of your current outdoor environment showing your ideal layout. Be sure to include items currently in the space as well as hopes for the future.
- Identify behavior challenges within your setting and consider how the environment may impact these behaviors. Make a plan to address environmental concerns and discuss with a supervisor.

Safe Practices and Policies

Objectives	- Describe how to set up and maintain a safe environment - Explain how to prevent and respond to injuries and emergencies
CDA Subject Area	- Planning a safe and healthy learning environment
Early Learning Guidelines	- Birth to 3: Physical and Motor Development - Ages 3 through 5: Health and Physical Development
Core Competency	- Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Overview

Establishing a safe environment is the first priority of any quality early care and education program. In the United States today, more children die of injury than from all diseases combined. Many people think of injuries as “accidents”—something unpredictable and unpreventable. However, injuries in early care and education programs tend to occur in predictable patterns and are preventable if adults know what to expect and how to prepare. Early childhood is a time when many injuries occur, yet most are preventable!

How can we expect children to learn if they don't feel safe? Unfortunately, early educators in early care and education programs often lack adequate child development knowledge so they do not know how to prepare the environment to match children's developmental abilities.

Discussion Questions

- What barriers/problems can you think of in maintaining a safe environment for children?

Review the licensing regulations, policies and procedures for your program related to this course

- Licensing regulations related to safety
- Safety checklists used at the program—what, where, when
- Consumer recalls – who monitors and takes action
- Supervision – indoors and outdoors
- Art materials
- Poison control information
- Incident report forms – where is the form stored, how is the information communicated to families and necessary staff

Demonstrate practices related to this course

- Complete a safety checklist and follow up as needed
- Fill out an incident report form following proper procedure
- Identify location of first aid kits

Emergency Preparedness

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify what emergencies you might be at risk for- Discuss how an emergency would affect you- Describe what you can do to prepare for emergencies- Plan how you will respond to emergencies
CDA Subject Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Planning a safe and healthy learning environment
Early Learning Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ages 3 through 5: Health and Physical Development
Core Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Overview

As an early educator, you are responsible for the safety and well-being of the children in your care. Your responsibilities include taking steps to reduce the risk of emergencies and planning how to respond to emergencies. Early care and education programs are more vulnerable because of the young age of children in their care. Being prepared can save children's lives. It can also allow you to provide care for the children of first responders and parents returning to work after a disaster.

Early care and education programs may be more vulnerable if they rely on part-time employees or volunteers. They are often stand-alone businesses, not part of a larger company or chain, and have limited resources and support. Being prepared can save your building and equipment. It can keep the business viable and allow you to return to work after a disaster.

Discussion Questions

- What types of disasters are most likely to occur in your community and what can be done to reduce risk?
- What might you say or show to a parent asking about the program's emergency preparedness?
- Why should you take the time to prepare for emergencies?

Review the licensing regulations, policies and procedures for your program related to this course

- Emergency procedures
- Required emergency training
- Emergency evacuation and transportation
- Fire and emergency evacuation drills
- Attendance and check-in/check-out

Demonstrate practices related to this course

- Lead an emergency drill
- Identify those in the program that might need assistance, equipment or have other special health needs
- Complete an emergency planning checklist
- Keep up-to-date information on all children and staff and supplies in an emergency kit

Health and Nutrition | There are many simple things you can do to make your early care and education program a healthier place. In this course you will explore what you can do to give kids the healthy start they need in life.

Healthy Practices

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify the three daily practices that help prevent the spread of germs- Understand how to practice them in your program- Learn how to handle bodily fluids
CDA Subject Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Planning a safe and healthy learning environment
Early Learning Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Birth to 3: Physical and Motor Development- Ages 3 through 5: Health and Physical Development
Core Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Overview

Concern about illness and disease in early care and education programs is an everyday worry for early educators and their families. When children become ill, they may require more attention and pass their germs on to other children, to their families, to you and your family. There are many simple things you can do to make your program a healthier place:

- Hand hygiene
- Diapering and toilet learning
- Cleaning and sanitation
- Standard precautions

Discussion Questions

- What reasons prevent you from practicing hand hygiene regularly?
- What are the key times to wash your hands?
- You have just completed the *Getting Started* training and have learned a great deal about handwashing. You now recognize how important it is for children and adults to wash hands frequently throughout the day. Your program policies require you to wash hands at certain points of contact, for example, before and after meals. As you get started in your new position, you notice your co-workers are not following through with the recommended practices. What would you do?

Review the licensing regulations, policies and procedures for your program related to this course

- Licensing regulations related to health
- Handwashing – when, where, how often
- Diapering procedure
- Sanitation – products used, where stored, when and how used
- Equipment sanitation
- Mealtime sanitation
- Bottle prep
- Bodily fluids
- Standard precautions and exposure policy

Demonstrate practices related to this course

- Demonstrate proper procedure for handwashing
- Demonstrate proper diaper changing technique
- Demonstrate proper bottle prep
- Identify standard precautions for dealing with bodily fluids
- Demonstrate mealtime sanitation procedures – before, during and after meals
- Demonstrate equipment sanitation

Illness Prevention and Management

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Describe how germs are spread- Explain how to prevent the spread of illness- Describe the importance of immunizations- Implement policies and procedures for managing illness
CDA Subject Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Planning a safe and healthy learning environment
Early Learning Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Birth to 3: Physical and Motor Development- Ages 3 through 5: Health and Physical Development
Core Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Overview

Illness is common in early care settings. When children are cared for in groups, they have many opportunities to come in contact with new germs and to spread those germs to others. While illness in early care settings cannot be completely wiped out, it can be reduced and managed when you know how germs are spread and by understanding what you can do to help keep kids healthy.

When a child is sick, parents usually keep them home until they are feeling better. However, the reality is that children with mild symptoms of common illnesses can safely attend your early care and education program as long as the child is not running a fever, can comfortably participate in your program and does not require more care than you can provide.

Discussion Questions

- How does the information presented in *Healthy Practices* and *Safe Practices* play a part in illness prevention?

Review the licensing regulations, policies and procedures for your program related to this course

- Licensing regulations regarding illness prevention
- Immunization policy
 - Staff
 - Children
- Procedures for reporting infectious diseases
- Exclusion policy
- Parent communication – who, what, when

Demonstrate practices related to this course

- Identify infectious diseases that must be reported and identify contact agency and phone number for reporting reportable diseases
- Identify program policy for exclusion
- Identify program policy for storing and administering medication
- Successfully administer medication to a child following program policy
- Write a sample letter to parents informing them about a health-related exposure

Food and Nutrition

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Know what children need in healthy meals- Know how to store and prepare foods safely- Organize mealtimes and plan menus to support the development of healthy eating habits in children
CDA Subject Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Planning a safe and healthy learning environment
Early Learning Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Birth to 3: Physical and Motor Development: Physical Health and Well-Being- Ages 3 through 5: Health and Physical Development: Physical Health and Well-Being
Core Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Overview

Early childhood is an exciting time developmentally. Children grow and develop more in the first five years than in any other period of life. Good nutrition is necessary for normal growth of the body and brain and to maintain a healthy immune system. A balanced diet can help prevent weak bones, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer and obesity, as well as behavioral and learning issues. As an early educator, you have an important role in making sure children have the foods they need for healthy growth. Early childhood is the time to help children develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime. Your attitudes and approaches to food influence the way children feel about themselves and the choices they learn to make. You are an essential ingredient in giving children a healthy start.

If your early care and education program provides food to children, the food must meet United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) standards and be properly prepared, sufficient in amounts, nutritious, varied according to the diets of the children enrolled and served at appropriate hours in a sanitary manner.

Discussion Questions

- How does your program's policy about food and nutrition support healthy lifestyles?
- Why is your role to establish what, when and where to eat, and the child's role to determine how much and even whether to eat?
- Do you have parents from another culture who are providing a portion or all of their children's food? If so, you may see foods you wouldn't think of serving to children or at the particular meal it's provided for.

Review the licensing regulations, policies and procedures for your program related to this course

- Licensing regulations related to food and nutrition
- Menu planning
- Meal and snack schedules
- Mealtime policy
 - Family-style or served
 - Trying food
 - Handling picky eaters
 - Finishing plate
 - Parent communication
- Food handling and storage
- Food allergies – who, what and how to handle
- Interactions with children during meals
- Infant policies
 - Choking hazards
 - Introducing solids
 - Bottle handling

Demonstrate practices related to this course

- Demonstrate proper procedure for warming a bottle
- Properly cut food into small sizes to prevent choking
- Read labels and identify appropriate food choices for children with food allergies
- Plan a complete menu for one week following dietary guidelines

Abuse and Reporting | You play an important role in helping to protect the health and wellness of North Dakota children. In this course we will learn about Abusive Head Trauma as well as what it means to be a mandated reporter.

Abusive Head Trauma	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand what abusive head trauma is, what actions cause it and why children are vulnerable - Identify signs of abusive head trauma - Apply practices to prevent abusive head trauma
CDA Subject Area	- Planning a safe and healthy learning environment
Early Learning Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Birth to 3: Physical and Motor Development - Ages 3 through 5: Physical Health and Well-Being
Core Competency	- Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Overview

Abusive head trauma is a collection of signs and symptoms that result from non-accidental shaking or impacting the head of an infant or small child. Although the term “shaken baby syndrome” is widely recognized, head trauma can be caused by more than shaking. The term used to describe these types of injuries needs to be expanded. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that “abusive head trauma” be used.

Abusive head trauma is a common cause of death and long-term disability of infants and young children. The exact number is not known. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (2003) reported that as many as 1300 children in the United States are severely injured or die from abusive head trauma each year.

Discussion Questions

- Why is it important to prevent and identify abusive head trauma?
- Infant crying can be overwhelming and irritating. What can you do if you find yourself feeling frustrated or angry?

Review the licensing regulations, policies and procedures for your program related to this course

- Licensing regulations related to mandated reporting
- Program procedure for reporting suspected abuse or neglect

Demonstrate practices related to this course

- Identify signs of abusive head trauma
- Develop a list of actions to take when an infant cries

Mandated Reporting

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Describe the signs of child abuse and neglect- Explain the why, what, where and when for mandated reporting
CDA Subject Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Planning a safe and healthy learning environment
Early Learning Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Birth to 3: Physical and Motor Development- Ages 3 through 5: Health and Physical Development
Core Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Overview

Mandated reporters are people whose profession requires them to report suspected child abuse or neglect. As a mandated reporter, you have a chance to make the world a better place, one child at a time. Research shows that most child abuse involves people responsible for taking care of the child, such as parents, family or household members or other caregivers. You may be the only person who can begin to make life better for an abused or neglected child.

Discussion Questions

- What type of feelings do you think you will experience if you suspect a child is being abused or neglected?
- What type of support do you think you will need before, during or after filing a report of suspected abuse or neglect?

Review the licensing regulations, policies and procedures for your program related to this course

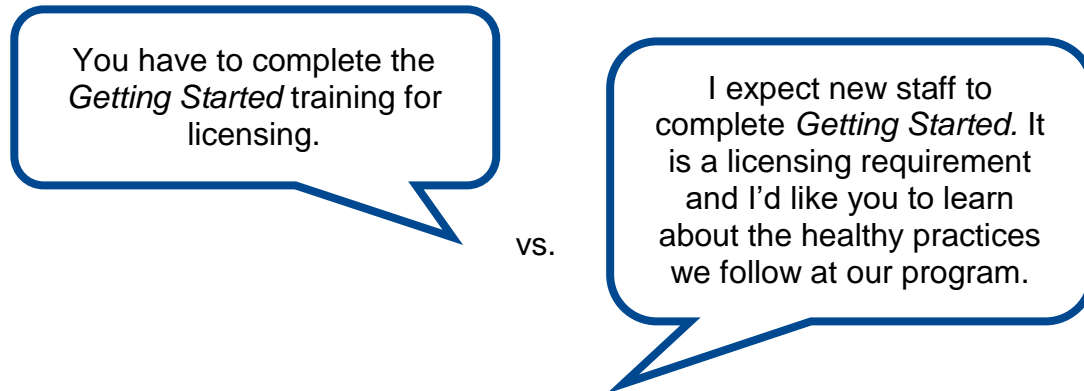
- Licensing regulations related to mandated reporting
- Program procedure for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect
 - Director informed
 - Parent informed
 - Documentation
 - Failure to follow policy
- Local agency/contacts to make reports
- Storage of forms
- Program resources and curriculum related to abuse and neglect

Demonstrate practices related to this course

- Identify signs of abuse and neglect
- Locate 960 form and fill out a sample
- Document a sample incident
- Identify contact information for local reporting agencies
- Identify program policies related to abuse and neglect matters

Getting Staff Engaged in Their Career

Think about how you convey the first training and professional development expectation you have for staff. Your attitude towards professional development sets the stage for how staff perceive the value of lifelong learning. You are key to helping staff put training into practice. Think about how you convey the first training and professional development expectation you have for staff...



After completing *Getting Started*, staff should apply to Growing Futures to be placed on the Career Pathways to be awarded a Career Category A designation. And then you need to...

- Capitalize on young teachers' excitement and idealism
- Support middle-age teachers as they reprioritize goals
- Provide opportunities for veteran teachers to consolidate achievement and transition to retirement

Pre- and Post-Training Conversations

Pre-training conversations prepare staff to be intentional about the training they are going to take and help supervisors to set the expectations of staff attending and taking training. Here are some suggestions for these conversations:

- Review the objectives of the training
- Discuss the importance of this training topic and how staff might use the knowledge and skills
- Help staff identify a specific issue, concern, need or situation that s/he hopes to find a solution for during the training
- Make it clear that you expect staff to use what they learn at training
- Let staff know what you will do to support application of new knowledge or skills
- Set a date and time for a post-training conversation to discuss what staff learned and how they plan to apply their new knowledge and skills

Post-training conversations are an opportunity for supervisors to discuss with staff what they have learned and how you can support them in applying the new knowledge and skills. Here are some suggestions for these conversations:

- Discuss development and/or implementation of the trainee's action plan
- Identify potential barriers that may prevent implementation
- Ask the trainee what support s/he will require for implementation (additional resources, permission to change a procedure, etc.)
- Identify opportunities to practice new skills
- Encourage the trainee to use the job aids received at the training
- Encourage the trainee to share what s/he learned with coworkers at a staff meeting

Why is Training and Professional Development Important?

Did you know? Children have about 1,825 days from the day they are born until they enter kindergarten. Incredibly, 90% of brain development happens during this short time. With so much growth happening in their first five years of life, children need quality early care and education programs to thrive. That's where you come in!

The future is in our hands. Many people enter the field of early care and education without the preparation necessary to do the job. In early childhood, the ability to do the job well is critically important because we are in the business of growing futures—everything we do influences who children are and who they will become. Our actions and decisions can promote a child's healthy development or cause harm that lasts a lifetime. This means that people who work with young children need very specific knowledge in early childhood development and good teaching methods to prepare and deliver services that foster children's health, growth, social and emotional capabilities, and ability to learn.

We have a responsibility to children. Research in several fields, including neuroscience, cognitive science and development psychology, shows that high quality early learning environments build a solid foundation for later achievement and citizenship. The outcomes of our work have far-reaching, society-wide implications. This is a huge responsibility that cannot be taken lightly.

We have a responsibility to each other. While children are at the heart of the early care and education field, it is also important that people who are employed in the field be able to grow their own futures by earning a livable wage, building job skills and advancing their career. Unfortunately, today many people who work in early care and education are not paid enough to provide for themselves, they often do not receive basic benefits such as health care, and career advancement is almost unheard of.

There is growing awareness. In the U.S. today, nearly 75% of all young children attend an early care and education program for at least part of the day, making this one of the most influential early environments that children experience. As early care and education programs become a common experience for children, there is increasing recognition that we need to make sure these programs support children's development and learning. Quality early care and education doesn't happen by accident. It is the result of careful and knowledgeable preparation, planning and delivery.

Early Learning Guidelines

Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) are research-based, measurable descriptions of the things we expect young children to know and be able to do at each age and stage of development. Early Learning Guidelines are the “road map” for planning, carrying out, and evaluating an early childhood environment to ensure that it supports children’s development and learning.

Who are the Early Learning Guidelines for? The ELG give everyone—from parents to policymakers—common language and common expectations for children’s development and learning.

Parents and family members	Early care and education professionals	Communities and policymakers
Build awareness of development	Guide planning for learning experiences that build foundational skills	Establish a framework for assessing the needs within the community
Increase communication between parents and other caregivers	Provide direction for planning appropriate assessment	Assess the impact of public policies on young children and their families
Increase awareness of quality care and education	Give direction to practitioner training and development	Improve public understanding of appropriate expectations, accountability, responsibility
	Instill accountability for the education offered to children	

How are Early Learning Guidelines organized? ELG identify the domains—or developmental areas—of early development and learning, and provide specific indicators that demonstrate children’s progress. In North Dakota, the guidelines have been divided into two documents: [Early Learning Guidelines Birth to Three](#) and [Early Learning Guidelines Three to Five](#).

Three to Five	Birth to Three
Health and Physical Development Social and Emotional Development Approaches to Learning Expressive Arts and Creative Thinking Language and Literacy Mathematics and Logical Thinking Science and Problem Solving Social Studies	Social and Emotional Development Language Development and Communication Cognitive Development Physical and Motor Development

Another important aspect of ELG is that they are designed to align with the [North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Content Standards for K-12](#) to better support kindergarten readiness for children. Use of the ELG is voluntary.

How can you use the ELG to plan developmentally appropriate learning environments for young children?

Step 1: Plan

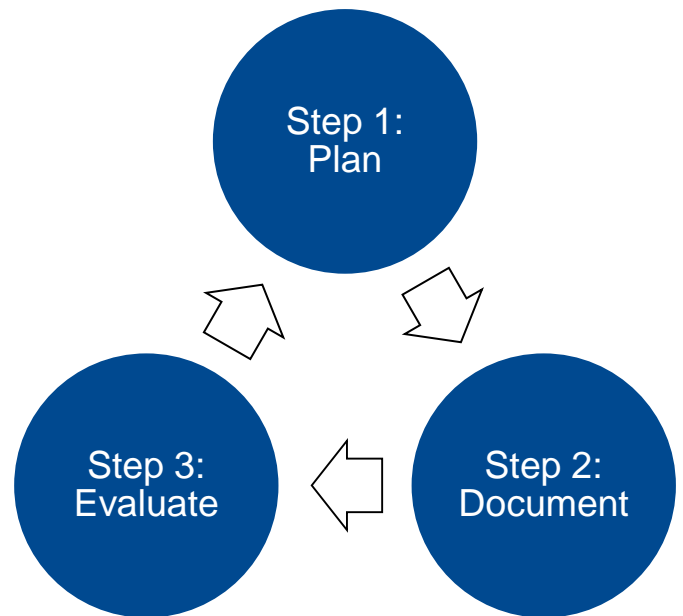
- Review each child's interests, capabilities, learning style and prior experiences
- Brainstorm activity ideas based on what you know about the children and your goals for them
- Using your goals for children, select the ELG domains and indicators that promote the goals
- Consider how specific children will react or help they may need
- Brainstorm open-ended questions to ask before, during, and after the activity to help children focus on their work and expand their thinking

Step 2: Document

- Stay close to children and provide support while you carry out the activity
- Jot down quick notes of children's responses to the activity. Note the skills and knowledge they demonstrate
- Make a portfolio for each child and keep evidence of their development. Gather and add documentation that shows a child's growth and learning

Step 3: Evaluate

- Consider how well the activity worked and how children showed what they learned
- Review and plan how you will support what the children learned and take their experience further



Core Competencies

[Core Competencies](#) are research-based, measurable descriptions of the things we expect practitioners to know and be able to do to promote young children’s healthy development. Core Competencies provide the foundation, they tell us WHAT we need to know as practitioners in the early care and education field. The Core Competencies provide guidelines for education and training programs in meeting the needs of practitioners in the field, including child care, relative care, preschool, Head Start, and early childhood special education.

A road map to success in an early care and education career | Core Competencies serve as a “road map” to gaining knowledge and skill in the early care and education field. They help practitioners plan intentional professional development to advance their career, make their job easier, and increase the quality of care for North Dakota’s children. This common set of expectations can be used by everyone—from practitioners to policymakers—when making decisions about practices carried out in early care and education settings.

Providers, teachers and administrators	Trainers, training organization and higher education	Communities and policymakers
Self-assess level of skill and knowledge	Plan and organize training to meet specific competencies	Develop and implement policies that will enhance professionalism in the field
Self-identify specific areas for future professional development and training	Coordinate and design course content to facilitate transfer and articulation agreements	Link core competencies to the efforts to support the success of each child in school
Establish a salary scale based on level achieved		Promote use across programs, agencies and higher education

Developing the “whole” practitioner | The areas of competency address the development and learning of the “whole” practitioner and correspond with traditional curricular areas in early care and education. The identified skills are divided into core content areas. Each content area describes the knowledge and skills needed in order to work with children birth through age eight and their families. The content areas are leveled to establish a continuum of learning and experience from the preliminary skills necessary to enter the field to an advanced level of academic preparation and varied experience. Practitioners advance through the levels through a combination of study and reflection of practice. The five levels are cumulative and build on the skills and knowledge of the previous level.

Core Content Areas	Level of Competency
<p>Child Growth and Development: understand how children acquire language and develop physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially.</p> <p>Learning Environment and Curriculum: establish an environment that provides learning experiences to meet each child’s needs, capabilities, and interests.</p> <p>Assessment and Planning for Individual Needs: observe and assess what children know and can do in order to provide curriculum and instruction that addresses their developmental and learning needs.</p> <p>Interactions with Children: establish supportive relationships with children and guide them as individuals and as part of a group.</p> <p>Families and Communities: work collaboratively with families and agencies/organizations to meet children’s needs and to encourage the community’s involvement with early childhood education and care.</p> <p>Health, Safety, and Nutrition: establish and maintain an environment that ensures children’s health, safety, and nourishment.</p> <p>Program Planning and Evaluation: establish, implement, evaluate, and enhance operation of an early childhood education and care program.</p> <p>Professional Development and Leadership: serve children and families in a professional manner and participate in the community as a representative of early childhood education and care.</p>	<p>Level 1: Minimal training or education</p> <p>Level 2: Includes the knowledge and skills of Level 1 plus knowledge corresponding with CDA (Child Development Associate) credential or equivalent training, education and experience working with young children</p> <p>Level 3: Includes the knowledge and skills of Levels 1 and 2 plus knowledge corresponding with an associate’s degree in early childhood education or child development or equivalent training and experience working with young children</p> <p>Level 4: Includes the knowledge and skills of Levels 1, 2, and 3 plus knowledge corresponding with a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education or child development and experience working with young children</p> <p>Level 5: Includes the knowledge and skills of Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 plus knowledge corresponding with an advanced degree in early childhood education or child development and extensive experience working with young children</p>

Core competencies can help you plan your future | Core competencies establish a set of standards that promote recognition of the significance and professional nature of this field and help providers progress through the Career Pathways by making intentional decisions about what to do next for personal growth. The process of planning for the development of new skills is the same cycle we use for planning in relation to the growth and development of new skills in children.

Step 1: Formulate a plan

- Think about your current interests, capabilities, learning style and prior experiences.
- What goal are you trying to accomplish and what might help you reach that goal? Identify the relevant Core Competency area and specific indicator that promotes your goal.
- Explore ways to increase your knowledge in a designated area: possibilities might include training or formal coursework, reading articles and reflecting on the information, or mentoring under an experienced practitioner. There are endless possibilities.
- Make a plan: decide on your course of action and set a goal that is specific and measurable.

Step 2: Implement the plan

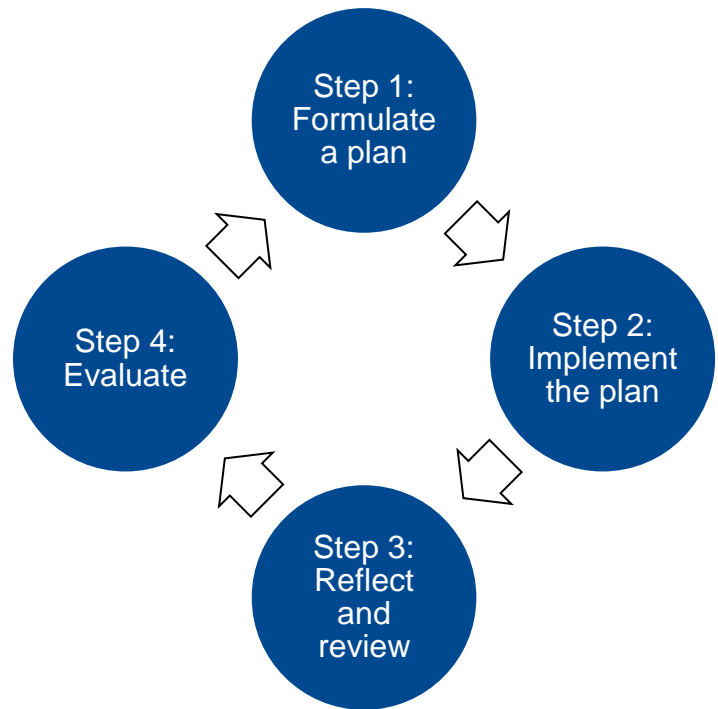
- Carry out the activity: update your portfolio as you progress. If additional training and knowledge are needed to advance you on the Career Pathways be sure to submit the needed documentation to Growing Futures.

Step 3: Reflect and review

- Reflect: reflect on your new knowledge and be sure you are putting the information in to practice.
- Review your goal: think back to your goal and reflect on whether your plan is helping you accomplish what you set out to do.

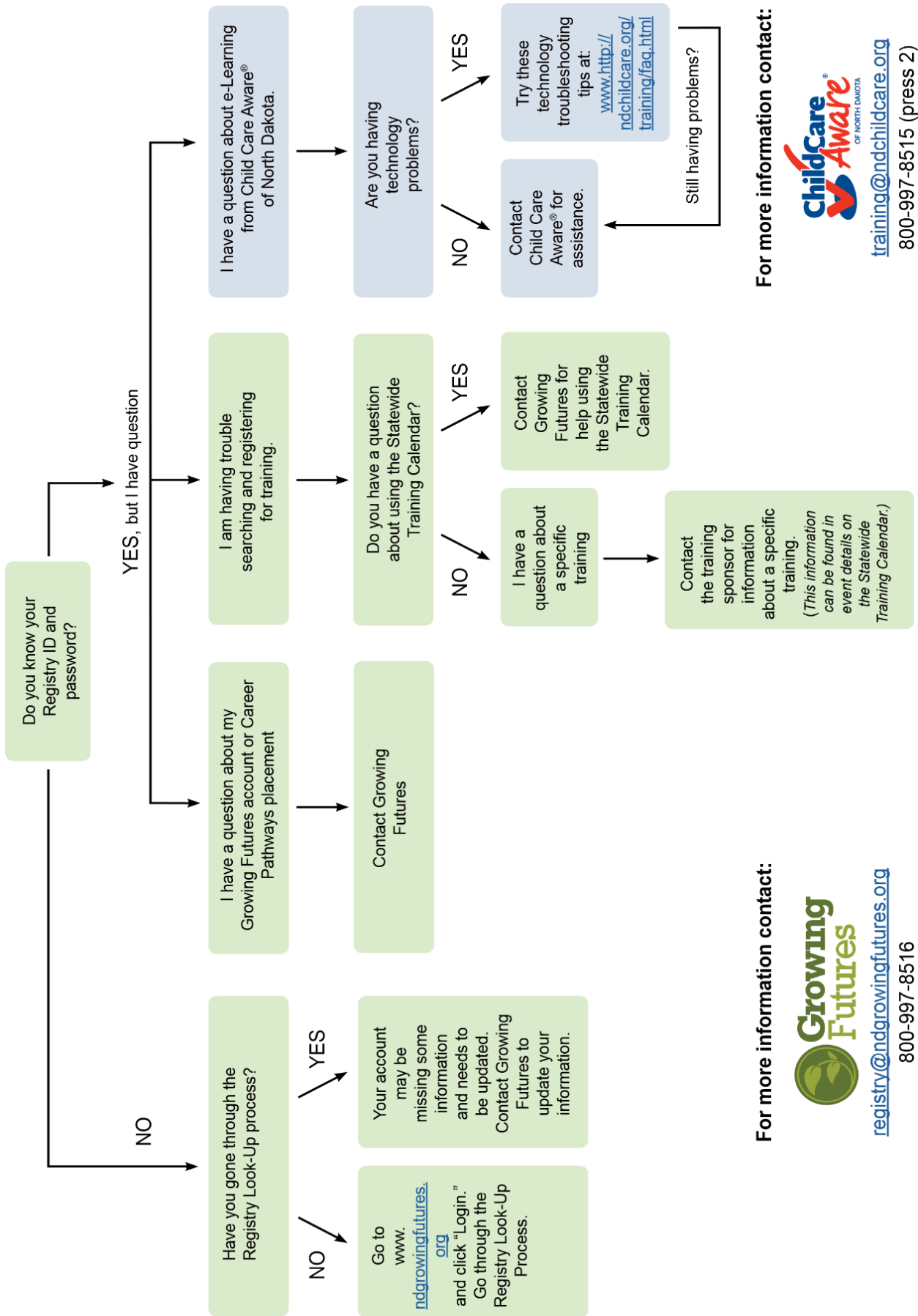
Step 4: Evaluate

- Review your plan: consider if you are on track to meet your goal.
- Plan again: do you need to make adjustments to accomplish your original goal or are you ready for next steps?



Keep moving forward | After accomplishing one goal take the next step and write a new goal, whether it's big or small. The important thing is to remember to keep moving forward.

Using the Growing Futures North Dakota Early Childhood Workforce Registry



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