



# Wisconsin Core Competencies

For Professionals Working with Young Children & Their Families

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## Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners

<http://www.collaboratingpartners.com>

Working Together to Transform Early Childhood Services

**Description:** The WECCP is a network of state, regional, and community, public and private, state departments, agencies, associations, and individuals working together to positively impact the lives of young children and their families encompassing the areas of early care and education, health, mental health, parent education and family support.

**The Vision:** All children in Wisconsin will receive the services and family supports they need in order to attain their optimal developmental potential during the critical years from birth through age five.

**The Mission:** Wisconsin communities, agencies, associations, and state government will work together as a system of high quality comprehensive early childhood services for every child and family who wants to access them.

**Wisconsin Professional Development Initiative (PDI)**  
**Core Competencies for Professionals Working with Young Children & Their Families**  
Approved by PDI members on September 6, 2007

**Introduction:**

The *Core Competencies for Professionals Working with Young Children and Their Families* were developed by the Professional Development Initiative (PDI), Competencies and Career Ladder Workgroup to create a document to assist providers across professions to understand the commonalities in their work with young children and their families. Our work in Wisconsin was guided by the priority to develop a tool that will cross systems and programs, including early care and education, health, mental health, parent education and family support. Conversations with several groups, including the Children's Trust Fund, Strengthening Families and the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health led to the idea of creating a list of "Core Competencies" that would be expected of any professional "touching the lives of a young children." This set of core competencies was created to apply to all experiences and educational levels and align with the specific competencies of the various professions. The member of the PDI Competencies and Career Ladder Workgroup reviewed early childhood cross-system competency documents developed by several states. For Wisconsin, the workgroup identified the core competency areas through an analysis and alignment of core knowledge areas across these programs/systems:

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Ten Teacher Standards ([link to website for PI34/teacher standards](#))
- Wisconsin Registry Core Knowledge Areas ([link to Registry core knowledge areas](#))
- Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health, Infant Mental Health (draft)
- Wisconsin Technical College Early Childhood Program Outcomes ([link](#))
- Children's Trust Fund- Managers and Providers Competencies ([link](#))
- Family Life Education ([link](#))

Several drafts of the document were presented to members of the Professional Development Initiative and the Action Team of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners. Additionally, the drafts were distributed to a variety of stakeholder groups throughout the development for input on the content and ideas for using the document. Feedback from each of these groups has been used to revise and improve the content of this document. On April 10, 2008 the Action Team of the WECCP reviewed a near final draft and supported the posting of this document on the WECCP website as a final product.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this document is to guide the professional growth and development of all individuals working with young children and their families. As the name implies, these are core competencies and they form the basis for more specific professional and licensing requirements across early care and education, health, family support, mental health, and parent education programs. There will also be an accompanying set of competencies that define core competencies for leadership/administration/management in various settings. The purposes of these core competencies include the following:

- Self assessment process to guide individual professional development planning
- Organizing framework for professional portfolios
- Common framework for all early childhood conferences and professional development experiences to identify competencies for workshops or training events

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**Core Competency- Core Content Areas:**

The Core Competencies are divided into nine areas as described below. *These nine core competency areas align with The Registry core knowledge areas as indicated in the abbreviation following each core competency area.* This alignment is helpful for individuals utilizing Registry bar codes to document training and experiences in their portfolio.

- I. Child Development (DEV):** principles of child growth and development including healthy infant-parent relationships and the role of protective factors
- II. Diversity (DIV):** culturally competent strategies that reflect the context, culture, and needs of the child and family
- III. Facilitating Child Development (DAP):** establish an environment that provides learning experiences that supports families and meet each child's needs, capabilities, and interests.
- IV. Health, Safety, and Nutrition (SAF):** establish and maintain an environment that ensures children's healthy development, safety, and nutrition and supports parents in providing safe and healthy environments.
- V. Child Guidance and Nurturing (GUI):** recognize individual differences and effects of temperament and personality of adults and children and establish supportive relationships with individuals and groups.
- VI. Observing and Assessment (OBS):** screen, observe and assess child interactions, knowledge and skills to support learning and make appropriate referrals for further evaluation
- VII. Professional Practice (PRO):** work with children and families in a professional manner, participate as a collaborative partner with other professionals, and utilize strategies to evaluate program outcomes.
- VIII. Parenting and Family Dynamics (FAM):** understand family systems and work in partnership with families, respecting the diversity of family structures including formal and informal support systems
- IX. Community Relationships (COM):** work collaboratively with families and agencies/organizations to meet child and family needs

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**Content Area # 1 Child Development (DEV)**

- Apply principles and theories of child growth and development and learning theory in guiding interactions and experiences with young children
- Understand attachment theory and the importance of healthy relationships for optimal development
- Understand the impact and importance of parental/caregiver nurturing and supervision for infant mental health and for the social and emotional development of children of all ages
- Acquire knowledge of biological and psycho-social factors impacting growth and developmental outcomes (temperament, regulatory issues, sensory problems, nutrition, brain development, culture, gender, family influences poverty)
- Demonstrate understanding of developmental consequences of stress and trauma, protective factors and resilience.
- Apply knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity and the significance of socio-cultural and political contexts for development and learning
- Value that children are best understood in the contexts of family, culture, and society
- Recognize typical and exceptional development
- Value that children are individuals with unique potentials and needs

**Content Area #2 Diversity (DIV)**

- Understand the importance and implications of diversity, anti-bias and inclusion principles in working with children and families
- Knowledge of specific needs and characteristics of diverse family systems
- Utilize a variety of strategies to support family strengths, values and beliefs
- Provide services in a culturally competent manner that reflects the context, culture, and needs of the child and family
- Utilize family goals, traditions, and cultural considerations in planning environments and programming to enrich children's health and experiences
- Recognize the impact of your own behaviors in a diverse society by creating safe, secure environments for all children; by showing appreciation of and respect for the individual differences and unique needs of others; and by empowering children to treat others with, and to expect from others equity, fairness, and dignity

**Content Area #3 Facilitating Child Development (DAP)**

- Utilize a wide range of theory and research based approaches and strategies to support development and learning including the following:
  - Foster oral language and communication
  - Make the most of environments and routines
  - Capitalize on incidental teaching
  - Focus on children's characteristics, needs, and interests
  - Link children's language and culture to the early childhood program
  - Teach through social interactions
  - Create support for play
  - Support children's social emotional development and positive behaviors
  - Support learning through technology
  - Offer predictable routines to foster security and support exploration
  - Use well designed indoor and outdoor environments to promote learning and development
  - Design and foster alternative approaches to learning.
  - Use strategies that promote successful transitions as children move between settings (such as hospital, home, infant/toddler preprimary, or primary programs) and within typical daily routines.
- Understand how all areas of development are interrelated
- Awareness of The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards and how they apply to a variety of settings

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- Value parent/family involvement in learning, and the critical role of parents as primary nurturers and teachers

**Content Area #4 Health and Safety (SAF)**

- Follow regulations and professional standards as they apply to health, safety, and nutrition
- Understand the importance of healthy diet, hygiene, nutrition, and physical activity for children's and adults' health and well-being
- Articulate the responsibilities for identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and neglect
- Recognize the characteristics and needs of parents, children, and families at risk for abuse and neglect and strategies to promote resiliency
- Understand the impact of abuse, neglect, and domestic violence on children and family members
- Acquire knowledge of current issues and community resources to promote and support a health and safety for children and families
- Support parents in providing a healthy and safe environment for their children
- Value a comprehensive approach to learning and development that recognizes the interrelationship between health, nutrition, learning, and development

**Content Area #5 Child Guidance and Nurturing (GUI)**

- Demonstrate techniques for soothing, limit setting and protection and discuss the meaning of these with parents
- Develop meaningful and responsive relationships with children and families
- Understand the underlying causes of children's challenging behaviors and research-based guidance approaches to meet children's individual needs
- Practice positive guidance strategies that meet individual needs such as
  - responsiveness,
  - creating a safe environment,
  - setting limits,
  - self regulation,
  - goal-setting,
  - role modeling,
  - dealing with anger and other emotions
- Recognize individual differences and effects of temperament and personality of adults and children related to guidance and nurturing
- Practice skills needed to support young children in increasing social competence, forming friendships, and interacting with others
- Understand the importance of play and its contribution to learning and healthy development
- Recognize that positive relationships and supportive interactions are the foundation for work with young children
- Recognize how your own behavior impacts the behavior of others

**Content Area #6 Observing and Assessment (OBS)**

- Use formal and informal screening instruments to identify young children who may have special needs.
- Recognize the strengths and weaknesses of multiple assessment methodologies and know how to use them effectively
- Utilize assessment approaches
  - That are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate
  - Which adapt tools and strategies using assistive technology as a resource
  - Interpret assessment results, with the goal of obtaining valid, useful information to inform practice and decision making
- Use information and observations from families as a part of the assessment process including observations in multiple settings of the parent's and child's emotional states and their interaction patterns

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- Know how and when to refer for further assessment or evaluation
- Value that responsible assessment enhances development of young children and is not used to exclude or deny access to learning opportunities

**Content Area # 7 Professional Practice (PRO)**

- Work within the regulation and code of ethics of the profession
- Demonstrate knowledge of applicable state and agency regulations with respect to such issues as eligibility for services, confidentiality, reporting of child abuse, and others
- Inform others about the value of services and programs for children and families
- Value supervision to enhance professional development and support self-care
- Apply research and effective practices critically and engage in self reflection to affect change
- Understand the impact of his/her own culture, educational background and values on children and families
- Work collaboratively with community and professional resources
- Work as a member of a team: practice openness to new information, communicate clearly one's own position and value, hold multiple viewpoints and reflect upon them. etc.
- Acquire knowledge of personal safety, professional boundaries, limitations, conflict resolution skills, working with difficult people, etc.
- Apply strategies to evaluate outcomes and assess effectiveness of programs on all participants
- Value the work as leaders and collaborators in the professional community to improve programs and practices for young children and their families
- Utilize opportunities to regularly analyze, evaluate, and synthesize to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of work.

**Content Area #8 Parenting and Family Dynamics (FAM)**

- Understand family systems theory, ecology of the family and their influence on the child's growth, development and learning
- Understand families: including how family members relate to each other, typical growth and development of family members, communication, stress and conflict management, special needs in families, as well as family disruption and unexpected changes
- Develop partnerships with parents that encourage family involvement in a child's development and learning
- Demonstrate awareness of boundaries in working with families
- Understand the variety of ways families teach, guide and influence children
- Understand and utilize the concept of "goodness of fit" in observing and supporting parent child interaction
- Respect the diversity of family structures and utilize non-judgmental approaches when working with families and community
- Provides opportunities for parent education that aligns with diverse interests and needs of families
- Acknowledge and support the formal and informal support systems as defined by families
- Use positive interpersonal skills when communicating with families

**Content Area #9 Community Relationships (COM)**

- Understanding of families and their relationships to other institutions such as the educational, governmental, religious, and occupational institutions in society
- Develop cooperative partnerships with other agencies and professionals working with children in the community and make appropriate referrals
- Utilize team-building, problem-solving, and conflict resolution strategies when working with community partners
- Recognize the impact of mass media on families and communities and design strategies to use media as a tool to assist in learning
- Value working with families and communities to support children's learning and development

<b>Common Title</b>	<b>10 Teacher Standards</b>	<b>Registry Core Knowledge Areas</b>	<b>Infant Mental Health (DRAFT)</b>	<b>WTCS Early Childhood Program Outcomes</b>	<b>Children's Trust Fund (Managers and providers)</b>	<b>Family Life Education</b>
1.Child Development	1.Child Development 2. Early Learning	1.Child Development	B. Child Development C. Biological and Psycho-social influences	A. Apply child development theory to practice	1. Child and Life Span Development	#3 Human Growth and development over the Life Span #4 Human Sexuality
2. Diversity	3. Diversity	4. Diversity		F. Provide a respectful, diverse, and inclusive program	6. Diversity in Family systems	#2 Internal Dynamics of Families
3. Learning strategies and curriculum	4. Instructional Strategies 6. Technology 7. Content Knowledge and curriculum	8. Developmentally Appropriate Practice	D. Observation, Screening, Assessment, Diagnosis & Intervention	C. Implement developmentally appropriate curriculum		
4. Health and safety		5. Health and Safety		E. Integrate health, safety, and nutrition practices according to local, state, and national standards	5. Health and Safety	#4 Human Sexuality
5. Child Guidance and Nurturing	5. Relationships/guidance	6. Guidance	D. Observation, Screening, Assessment, Diagnosis & Intervention	D. Incorporate developmentally appropriate guidance strategies	4. Guidance and Nurturing	# 5 Interpersonal Relationships
6. Observation and Assessment	8. Assessment	7. Observation	D. Observation, Screening, Assessment, Diagnosis & Intervention	B. Observe, record, and assess child growth and development		
7. Professional Practice	9. Professional development and reflection	15. Professionalism	E. Interdisciplinary collaboration F. Ethics	H. Demonstrate professional and ethical standards I. Advocate for children, families, and the profession	8. Professional practice and self care Mgr 7 Community advocacy and collaboration Mgr 8 Public policy	#8 Family Law and Public Policy # 9 Ethics

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					advocacy and involvement	
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8. Parenting and Family Dynamics	10. Family and community partnerships	2. Family	A. Parenting, family functioning, & child/parent relationships	G. Use interpersonal skills to develop respectful relationships with children and adults	2. Dynamics of Family Relationships 3./mgr 1. Family support and parenting education principles, methods, and approaches 7. Relationships among Family, school, and community	#2 Internal dynamics of families #6 Family Resource Management #7 Parent Education and Guidance
9. Community Relationships	10. Family and community partnerships	3. Community	E. Interdisciplinary collaboration		7. Relationships among Family, school, and community Mgr 7 Community advocacy and collaboration	#1 Families in Society
10. Administration and Management		9. Organization 10. Financial 11. Marketing 12. Personnel 13. Regulations 14. Legal			Mgr 2 Program planning and evaluation Mgr 3 Marketing and outreach Mgr 4 Fund development Mgr 5. Budget management Mgr 6. Personnel	
11. Adult education		16. Adult Education				#10 Family Life Education Methodology