



Growing FUTURES

North Dakota Professional Development

Growing the knowledge and competencies of early childhood practitioners, promoting the development of successful careers in early care and education, and strengthening early childhood programs to support healthy developmental and learning outcomes for children.

The first draft of the **North Dakota Growing Futures Professional Development** plan was developed in 2005 and was the result of the hard work and dedication of many stakeholders who volunteered their time and energy to meet, discuss, debate, research, and write. Their hard work gave momentum to Growing Futures and laid the foundation for the significant progress that has been made around professional development over the last few years. This document and the system it describes are rooted in their contributions.

The 2005 plan was a concept of professional development, based on a compilation of ideas from various state and national sources. Because actual processes for carrying out the components of a professional development system did not exist or were disconnected at that time, the plan was intended to be the starting point rather than the destination. The 2005 plan provided the impetus for organizations such as the North Dakota Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium and Child Care Resource and Referral to work within their arena to develop the systems and processes needed to support a fully mature professional development system. As those processes have been developed, the structure of Growing Futures has become more clearly defined, and functions that were just ideas in 2005 have become reality.

As you read this document, you will see many similarities to the 2005 plan. For example, the components of the system are still the foundation of Growing Futures in North Dakota. The goal of supporting practitioners in the field to grow and advance their skills, knowledge, and job opportunities is still the function of professional development. And the wellbeing of North Dakota's children is still at the heart of the plan. You will also see some changes, places where ideas that were included in the original plan have been eliminated or incorporated into other aspects of the system.

Just as an individual's personal and professional growth is ongoing, the Growing Futures professional development system continues to grow and change. By definition, a professional development system is always a work in progress. Today, we have made tremendous strides toward the system envisioned in the 2005 plan. But we also know that the system will continue to grow in the coming years.

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North Dakota Professional Development

Introduction

What is early childhood professional development? Who is it for? Why is it important for North Dakota? For nearly two decades, these questions have generated ongoing discussion in the state's early childhood community. This document describes the system of early childhood professional development that has emerged as a result of these discussions.

Definition of Professional Development

The National Association for the Education of Young Children defines professional development as "a comprehensive system of preparation and ongoing development and support for all early childhood education professional working with and on behalf of young children" (LeMoine, 2008).

Professional development is the systematic preparatory process by which early childhood care practitioners gain the knowledge and skills necessary to serve children and families through both informal (community based) and formal (higher education) training and education. At the same time, a professional development system maps the careers options available in the field of early childhood and sets standards for achievement of career goals.

Professional development in early childhood, as in any other career field, means cumulative progress toward a career goal through pre-determined steps. Most professions require practitioners to achieve some level of professional preparation prior to employment and to meet continuing professional development requirements. Practitioners are also required to demonstrate their preparedness to successfully fulfill their job duties and keep their knowledge and skills up to date.

The framework for an integrated and comprehensive system of early childhood professional development includes:

- **Core Knowledge and Core Competency:** body of knowledge that informs and directs the field of early care and education and the skills needed by early care and education practitioners to successfully meet the developmental and learning needs of young children
- **Access and Outreach:** opportunities for practitioners, trainers, and others to access the training and education they need, when and where they need it

- **Qualifications, Credentials and Pathways:** minimum qualifications for entry in the field as well as ongoing educational requirements for career progression and professional designations
- **Quality Assurance:** system of training and trainer approval as well as a Quality Rating System that assesses and promotes the quality of early care and education programs
- **Supports and Financing:** scholarships and incentives that support ongoing professional development as well as access to career advice and support

Vision and Goals

Working with stakeholders and building on the contributions and commitment of the early childhood community over the years, the following vision and goals have been identified to guide early childhood professional development in North Dakota:

Vision: A coordinated system that grows the knowledge and competencies of individuals who provide care and education to children ages birth to 8-years, promotes the development of successful careers in early care and education, and strengthens early childhood programs to support healthy developmental and learning outcomes for children

The vision is addressed through the following goals:

- Facilitate coordination of training and education opportunities for early childhood practitioners
- Ensure that training and education approved for professional development aligns with Core Competencies and equips practitioners with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to support children's development and learning
- Provide continual access to all systems components to practitioners, trainers, and others regardless of location, income or background
- Establish training and educational opportunities for early childhood practitioners that are progressive and cumulative, and linked to Growing Futures Career Pathways and the Quality Rating and Improvement System

Specific outcomes may include:

- Increased number of practitioners who have a valid professional credential or degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development
- Increased number of programs that participate in Quality Rating and Improvement
- Increased number of accredited programs
- Enhanced training infrastructure to support ongoing professional development of early childhood care and education practitioners
- Increased participation in the professional development system
- Increased access to professional development services and support
- Increased program start-up and practitioner retention
- Improved competence, professionalism, and recognition of individuals in the field

Early Childhood in North Dakota

The field of early childhood contributes greatly to the quality of life and economic well-being of North Dakota. According to the North Dakota KIDS COUNT! research brief, *“Economic Impact of Child Care in North Dakota”* (Fassinger, Jenson, and Rathge, 2004), the child care industry supports the state’s economy by helping thousands of parents join the labor force, creating employment for more than 6000 child care workers, generating annual revenues of more than \$123 million dollars, contributing to the state’s economy through the purchase of goods and services, and providing an important resource for employee recruitment and the reduction of turnover and absenteeism.

In North Dakota today, it is more common for a young child, birth through five years of age, to spend most of the day with a care provider than with a parent. Seventy-six percent of North Dakota mothers (ND KIDS COUNT! 2005) with children under age six are in the workforce, approximately 10% higher than the national average. Increasingly, children are spending their days in formal care settings, such as licensed family-based or center-based programs, or in informal unlicensed care settings.

Research overwhelmingly indicates that the early care and education a child receives has a significant influence on the child’s development and impacts the child’s ability to learn. A synthesis of research in the 2000 report from the National Research Council (NRC), *Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers* pointed to teacher quality as the most important factor in young children’s readiness for school. Several longitudinal studies of long-term child success showed that the factors that lead to positive developmental outcomes for children include well trained caregivers and teachers, as well as high-quality, well-planned curriculum and child assessment (Wasik, Ramey, Bryant, & Sparling, 1990; Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993; Carolina Abecedarian Project, 1999; Peisner-Feinberg, E.S., Burchinal, M.R., Clifford, R.M.,Culkin, Howes, Kagan, Yazejian, Byler, Rustici, & Zelazo, 1999; Bowman., Donovan, & Burns,2001; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, Mann, 2001).

The kinds of environments that promote desirable outcomes for children rarely happen by accident. Instead, they are the result of intentional, purposeful, and comprehensive preparation of practitioners. The more preparation teachers and caregivers have, the better able they are to establish the quality of care that leads to positive outcomes for children and to greater readiness for school. The National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (2008), states that:

- Specialized early childhood professional preparation is more predictive of positive child outcomes than teachers’ number of years of experience
- Professional preparation for early childhood teachers is relevant to the age group of young children (ages 3-8yrs.) and different from Elementary teachers’ preparation

Studies have found that among non-degreed caregivers and teachers, the number of hours spent in trainings and workshops in specialized early childhood education preparation is more predictive of successful child – adult interactions than the number of years of experience the adult may have (Honig & Hirallal, 1998; Kontos, Howes, & Galinsky, 1997; Kontos & Wilcoz-Herzog, 2001). The National Center for Early Development and Learning’s Multi-State Pre-Kindergarten Study of 238 classrooms across six states also found that quality was higher when teachers had some level of specialized preparation in early childhood (Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early, & Barbarin, 2005).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children specifies that preparation of early childhood practitioners include a foundation in child development, theory, research as well as training in developmentally appropriate instructional practice. Early childhood preparation also includes specific skills to identify children with special needs for early referral and early interventions than may reduce longer term complications and reduce more extensive special education in later years. (Honig & Hirallal, 1998; Kontos, Howes, & Galinsky, 1997; Kontos & Wilcoz-Herzog, 2001).

However, in North Dakota an individual can become a licensed child care provider or a teacher in a licensed child care program with no pre-service preparation and no demonstrated knowledge or skill in meeting the developmental and learning needs of young children. An individual can become a child care center director with no formal education or administrative training. Training requirements for license renewal are minimal and include just 9-13 hours of unspecified and discontinuous training with no evaluative process to assess learning or application of training content to practice.

Growing Futures Professional Development bridges the gap between research and reality by specifying qualifications and ongoing development necessary for all early care and education professionals, and implementing a comprehensive and accessible approach to training and professional preparation for the early childhood workforce. Growing Futures is a voluntary system for individuals who are focused on intentional professional growth and demonstrating their commitment to quality care and education.

Advisory Structure

North Dakota's early childhood professional development system has evolved over a multi-year period and has benefited by the inclusion of stakeholders and representatives from diverse settings and roles in the early childhood field. A professional development stakeholders committee has convened on an ongoing basis to review and recommend components of the professional development system. Under the direction of North Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) Early Childhood Services, and with the support of the Head Start Collaboration Office, sub-committees and work groups were established in February 2007 to address aspects of Growing Futures Professional Development. Three sub-committees were established: Career Development, Professional Recognition, and Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Systems Infrastructure

Components of the System

The specific components of the Growing Futures Professional Development System include the following: **(NOTE: a number of components are described in greater detail in later sections of this document)**

- **Career Pathways:**

Growing Futures Career Pathways detail the Core Competency training and formal education that best prepares individuals for careers in early childhood across numerous early care and education sectors. Individuals are able to enter the pathways at any point. The pathways guide individuals as they create a learning plan to reach educational and career goals, and assist programs in selecting highly qualified staff.

Growing Futures Career Pathways are organized into ten categories (A-J) of training and education that ranges from a high school diploma through advanced degrees and describe some of the early childhood career opportunities available at each level of qualification. Categories A-F apply to career preparation involving informal community-based professional development and support completion of the education requirements of the national CDA Credential. Categories G-J apply to career preparation involving the formal higher education system and the completion of degrees. All categories support NAEYC and NAFCC accreditation.

The Career Pathways reflect the recent changes to Head Start staff requirements under the 2007 Head Start Reauthorization Act. In addition, the categories align with the steps of the Quality Rating and Improvement System currently being piloted in Cass County to ensure that professional development training and education links participants to incentives and professional recognition.

(See Appendix to find link to the Career Pathways document)

- **Core Competencies:**

Core Competencies describe the knowledge and skills practitioners need in order to work with children birth through age eight and their families. The Core Competencies are divided into eight content areas that address practitioner learning and development and correspond to traditional curricular areas in early childhood education and care. Core Competencies are applicable in a wide variety of settings and programs including child care, preschool, school readiness, Head Start, early childhood special education, school age child care, and others.

Each of the eight content areas is leveled to describe a continuum from the preliminary skills necessary to enter the field to an advanced level of academic preparation and varied experience. An individual may have skills at varying levels in different core content areas, depending on the person's role, setting, and experience.

The core knowledge and skills identified in the Core Competencies are used to define the content of Core Competency training curriculum, which is linked to the Growing Futures Career Pathways categories as well as to the levels of the Quality Rating and Improvement System. Core Competencies can also be used to direct training and

education institutions in planning programming to best prepare practitioners for work in the field of early care and education.

Core Competencies are closely linked to North Dakota's Early Learning Guidelines, which define the expected developmental outcomes for children birth to age six. (See *Appendix to find link to complete Core Competencies and Early Learning Guidelines documents*)

- **Registry:**

North Dakota Child Care Resource and Referral (ND CCR&R) is contracted by the ND Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop and manage a professional development Registry database capable of supporting specific statewide professional development functions that include training and career development tracking, a training and trainer approval system, a clearinghouse of approved training and centralized training calendar, and connections to higher education.

Based on the recommendations of the National Registry Alliance, the Training and Trainer Approval work group developed a site map for the Registry website and approved a list of data fields necessary to carry out the Growing Futures professional development system. These tools were approved by the larger Growing Futures Professional Development Stakeholder Committee in late 2008.

In 2008, ND CCR&R launched its online training and tracking software – a customized database designed to perform the Registry professional development functions. In 2008-2009, the software was piloted by ND CCR&R and is now ready to assume a wider role as the registry system for professional development.

The software's data fields track demographic and professional information by individual, maintaining an ongoing record of that individual's training and education to ensure that individual professional development records are cumulative, verified, and accessible. These data fields align with and support both the Growing Futures Career Pathways and Quality Rating and Improvement levels. Individuals can easily access their own training records, update basic personal information, and print their own training records and certificates online. Licensors are able to view an individual's record of completed training online.

The software is also designed to maintain information on approved training, to make that information available on an online calendar, and to accept online registration for approved training. Sponsors of approved training can manage their sessions online, including the ability to update training information and award training hours to attendees. The software then automatically posts the training hour credit to the individual attendee's training record to ensure that training records are complete and current.

An important function of the Growing Futures Registry is the ability to track and report North Dakota's early childhood professional development data both for in-state purposes as well as national data reporting. To ensure that North Dakota is aligning with national efforts, the Registry data fields are built to the specifications required by the National Registry Alliance (TNRA). The operations of the Registry are being developed to adhere to the best practices standards of the TNRA to ensure data privacy as well as the accuracy and reliability of Registry data.

North Dakota's colleges and universities maintain records of completion of for-credit and CEU coursework. An official transcript is the University's certified statement of an individual's academic record.

Growing Futures Registry training records will be the official documentation of informal training that applies to professional development. For the purpose of documenting professional development, an individual who has completed both formal and informal coursework will use both their official transcript and Registry training record.

Individuals who wish to apply credit-bearing coursework, a degree, or a national professional designation such as the CDA to placement on the Career Pathways will submit official transcripts and documentation to the Registry to verify credit-bearing coursework or completion of degrees and credentials.

(The Registry website is currently under construction at www.ndgrowingfutures.org)

- **Training approval:**

A specific Registry function is approval of training that is applied to professional development designations of the Growing Futures Career Pathways or identified as "Growing Futures Approved." A process by which training submitted for approval is reviewed will be implemented to ensure that materials are research-based and support ongoing acquisition and application of Core Competencies by training attendees. Approved training is accessible through a central clearinghouse and a current, ongoing record of attendance at approved training is maintained for individual practitioners. Criteria for training approval were developed by the Training and Trainer Approval work group and approved by the larger Professional Development Stakeholder Committee in late 2008.

- **Trainer Registry:**

The Growing Futures Registry database has been configured to include data fields to track and promote individuals who have been approved to deliver training recognized by the *Growing Futures* Professional Development system and who meet the requirements of various training and education systems, such as those set nationally for CDA training or by higher education institutions to issue CEU credits. The data fields track qualifications, education, credentials and certifications, and specializations. Information can also be maintained on evaluations of trainers completed by attendees at training sessions.

The data fields designed for trainer approval can also be used to track individuals who meet the qualifications to be a CDA advisor. As part of the construction of the Registry website, searchable tables are being created for both approved trainers and CDA advisors, so that individuals and organizations can easily access that information.

Currently, the process of trainer approval is under development. However, trainer qualifications at four levels are identified on the Career Pathways. Additionally, ND CCR&R has been piloting a method of trainer leveling, mentoring, and support. All ND CCR&R trainers who present real-time online courses are required to attend a six-week Effective Practices course on delivering online training and to be mentored for a period of time before presenting a course on their own.

The trainer's section of the Registry website will include resources for trainers and a discussion board for trainer to share tips and ideas. As a second phase of the website development, online training sessions for trainers will be created to address basic trainer skills and effective practices.

- **Training Clearinghouse:**

A Registry also includes a centralized clearinghouse for approved training. In North Dakota, the training clearinghouse has been designed as an online training calendar, which is currently being piloted by ND CCR&R. Since 2008, ND CCR&R training has been promoted through the online calendar, and registration has been accepted online. Once the Registry website construction is complete, the online calendar and registration will be expanded to include all approved training and educational opportunities, and will be available through the Registry website to ensure that approved training information is accessible across the state.

(To view the pilot online calendar, visit www.ndchildcare.org and click “Search for Training”)

- **Career Support:**

Support for career development is a process of informing individuals about the entry qualifications and ongoing training and education requirements for professional roles in the early childhood field as defined by the Career Pathways.

Career support includes helping practitioners to assess their current qualification, review completed training and education, identify resources, and set goals for career advancement.

A system of career support and technical assistance for child care practitioners is currently being piloted by ND CCR&R to help individuals plan their professional development to achieve specific personal and professional goals.

Career advising is available for those enrolled in an Early Childhood degree program at a state college or university through various campus services.

- **Specialized Credentials:**

Specialized credentials support the qualifications for career categories by providing in-depth content knowledge in specialized areas. Currently, a center director credential is being piloted in North Dakota using the Aim4Excellence program developed by the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University. A center director credential is an important professional designation for the child care field in North Dakota. Under current state licensing rules, an individual can be qualified to become a center director with a CDA Credential, no formal education or degree, and no administrative training.

Aim4Excellence is designed to equip center directors with knowledge and skills critical to their role. The program is organized in nine self-paced modules offered in an online environment for easy access. This program is endorsed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

A center director credential is a career qualification on the Growing Futures Career Pathways (Category F) and correlates to levels on the Quality Rating and Improvements System being piloted in Cass County.

- **Articulation:**

Articulation refers to the transfer of credentials, courses, credits, and degrees from one program or institution to another without loss of credit. This allows early childhood

professionals to move easily through and across programs of professional preparation, such as the CDA Credential, and undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

To ensure that coursework completed as part of an Early Childhood Education degree at one North Dakota college or university will transfer and be applied to a degree program at another, the North Dakota's Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium has established a system of common course numbering for courses taken at state colleges and universities as part of an early childhood education degree program. (Visit <http://www.ndus.nodak.edu/students/ccn/matrix/discipline.asp?id=54> for more information)

• **Incentives and Scholarships:**

An important aspect of a professional development system is to encourage and reward ongoing professional growth and progression along the Growing Futures Career Pathways through recognition, incentives, and scholarships. Through June 2011, scholarships are available for individuals to complete CDA training and direct assessment, and technical assistance and incentives are tied to ongoing training and Career Pathways progression.

Linkages and Integration

The revision of this plan has been a collaborative process with representation from child care, Head Start and higher education. A comprehensive professional development plan will also include integration of emerging Pre-K, before and after school, and early intervention programming, and related roles such as licensers, resource and referral personnel, health consultants, etc. Outreach to include these sectors is recommended to broaden the perspective and utility of this plan.

The current plan deliberately integrates:

- North Dakota Early Learning Guidelines for both Birth to Three, and Three through Five
- North Dakota Core Competencies for Early Education and Care Practitioners
- Growing Futures Quality Rating and Improvement System Standards
- Growing Futures Career Pathways

Core Knowledge and Competencies

Early Learning Guidelines

All early childhood professional development, both informal and formal, is intended to accomplish one fundamental objective – to prepare those who work in the field to meet the specific developmental and learning needs of young children. North Dakota Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) are a way to define the developmental and learning outcomes expected for children across all care settings, including home, relative care, child care, preschool, and Head Start.

Early Learning Guidelines are defined as 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 (National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Care and Early Education, 2010). ELG are the starting point for planning, carrying out, and evaluating an early childhood environment to ensure that it supports children’s development and learning. 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-Three* and *Early Learning Guidelines Three-Five*.

Work on the *Early Learning Guidelines for Three-Five* began in 2005 under the guidance of the North Dakota Department of Human Services. Stakeholders were involved in the creation of the document, including parents, child care providers, kindergarten teachers, university faculty, Head Start staff, special educators, and representatives from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. Wording for the guidelines was adapted from other states and from the national database of early learning guidelines. The document was finalized in late 2007.

In 2008, the North Dakota Department of Human Services worked with the state of Minnesota to adopt the Minnesota *Early Learning Guidelines Birth-Three* in North Dakota. Today, these guidelines are used in North Dakota with the permission of the Minnesota Departments of Health and of Human Services.

The ELG 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 ND ELG is voluntary.

All Core Competency Training references the Early Learning Guidelines and draws connections where applicable. In addition, the Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium is working to incorporate the Early Learning Guidelines in course content for Early Childhood Education degree programs. (See *Appendix to find link to full Early Learning Guidelines documents*)

Core Competencies

In June 2007, the professional development stakeholder committee recommended that North Dakota adopt the core competencies document developed by Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children and accepted by the Minnesota professional development system. In 2008, North Dakota adopted the Minnesota Core Competencies.

The Core Competencies are organized into eight content areas that define the observable skills care providers must demonstrate to provide quality early care and education, and to support children’s learning and development – what adults who work with children must be able to do to support children in reaching desired outcomes. The Core Competencies are worded so that they can be measured and demonstrated. Core Competency content areas are:

- Child Growth and Development
- Learning Environment and Curriculum
- Assessment and Planning for Individual Needs
- Interactions with Children
- Families and Communities
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Program Planning and Evaluation
- Professional Development and Leadership

The eight content areas contain five levels that range from the skills and knowledge of a beginning practitioner to the more advanced skills and knowledge possessed by a professional with a master’s degree. (See *Appendix to find link to full Core Competencies document*)

Core Competency Training

Core Competency Training is a unique and continuous approach to informal child care training that provides a foundation of knowledge and best practice in early care and education. The content of Core Competency Training is designed to support the development and application of skills in the eight content areas of the North Dakota Core Competencies and to support progression on the Career Pathways. Core Competency Training:

- Describes the skill or knowledge to be learned in a way that is easily understandable and applicable to the job
- Explains accepted standards for performance
- Is controlled by the practitioner in terms of pace and sequence
- Provides opportunities for the practitioner to apply the knowledge in scenarios and case studies that closely resemble the job
- Provides opportunity for practitioners to test themselves on the skills and knowledge taught
- Provides a variety of learning strategies to meet a range of individual learning characteristics
- Connects to technical assistance to provide coaching on skills and practices on the job for practitioners who wish to participate

Core Competency Training is provided through North Dakota CCR&R in an online self-study and self-paced format to allow easy access wherever and whenever a practitioner is ready for the content. Practitioners register and complete the course and learning review online. Courses are open to the practitioner for a period of 12 months from registration so that factors such as weather or family obligations do not impact the practitioner’s ability to complete the course and move forward on the Career Pathways or toward other professional goals.

Each course allows up to three attempts to successfully complete the course by achieving a learning review score of 80% or higher. Once the course has been successfully completed, the database automatically applies the clock hour credits to the

practitioner's training record to ensure that records are up-to-date and accurate. Practitioners can then print their own training certificates.

Some Core Competency Training content is considered to be universal, meaning that the content applies to all early care and education practitioners in all settings. Other content is elective so that practitioners can create personal learning paths that are applicable to their professional role and setting, and to their career goals.

Core Competency Training is designed to be cumulative, from entry level through approximately Competency Level 3 as defined by North Dakota's Core Competencies, and corresponds to Career Pathways categories A-D. The training is comprised of three groups of training, each totaling approximately 40 clock hours to align with Career Pathways training requirements, for a total of 120 hours.

In addition to supporting the Career Pathways, Core Competency Training aligns with the national CDA education requirements and may be used to complete the Direct Assessment requirements to apply for a CDA Credential.

Higher Education Early Childhood Accreditation Standards

The Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) is an independent state agency licensing board for the State of North Dakota with responsibility for educator licensing, teacher education program approval, professional practices and professional development.

The ESPB, with input from the teaching profession and representatives of school administrators, school board members, teacher educator professors, and other interested citizens, sets standards for, and approves, teacher education programs. The Board continually reviews the North Dakota standards and procedures pertaining to licensure and teacher education program approval. All North Dakota teacher education programs must be reviewed on a seven-year cycle. Without this approval, graduates of the program cannot be licensed in North Dakota.

In 2000 the ESPB adopted the performance-oriented standards of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE 2000) for approval of all teacher education schools, colleges, or department of educations in the state. In addition, the Board has revised its North Dakota standards for subject matter areas which require colleges of education to include multiple performance assessments of those moving through their programs and to show that all programs incorporate the use of appropriate technologies as they apply to teaching and to specific content material.

Early Childhood teacher education degree programs are expected to demonstrate the use of performance assessments within their programs.

Access and Outreach

The field of early childhood is extremely diverse. Individuals in the field differ in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, language, ability, education, location, access to technology, and socio-economic status. Individuals can be employed in the field of early care and education in a variety of settings and roles. A goal of the professional development system is to encourage the greatest level of participation across the widest possible spectrum by ensuring that professional development opportunities are easily accessible, inclusive, and seamless.

Online Database of Training and Education Opportunities

To ensure that practitioners in every area of the state have access to the training information they need when they need it, The Growing Futures Registry will include an online database of approved training and educational opportunities. This system is currently being piloted by ND CCR&R and will be transferred to the Growing Futures Registry website once that system is operational.

The database is designed to promote approved training through an online training calendar. The online calendar is searchable by competency area (both North Dakota Competencies and CDA Competencies), topic, practitioner role and setting, location, and key word, and provides both a running list of current approved training as well as a monthly view. Information that can be viewed on each training session includes a description, location, dates and times, number of clock hours, available CEUs, and the competency areas (ND and CDA). The training description can include links to course materials to allow participants to download course handouts or resources.

The system is also designed to process online training registration and accept credit card payments, giving trainers and training sponsors access to accurate real-time registration information to better manage their training sessions. Trainers can manage their courses through an online portal to instantly update training attendance and award credit.

Once credit has been awarded, the system automatically adds the credit to the individual practitioner's training record. The individual can then access their own training information online, and print their own training certificates or ongoing training record. The database tracks successful completion of training as well as no-shows and unsuccessful attempts to complete training – data that can be used to plan more accessible and applicable training in the future.

Licensors are also able to view individual training records through a dedicated portal to provide immediate access to information used to verify attendance at approved training. *(To view the pilot online calendar, visit www.ndchildcare.org and click "Search for Training")*

Career Development Support

A system of career support and technical assistance for child care practitioners is currently being piloted by ND CCR&R, to help individuals plan their professional development in a purposeful and intentional way. ND CCR&R Consultants assist

individuals to select Core Competency Training to meet personal and professional goals, access appropriate training in a timely manner, and apply training content to practice. Technical assistance is aligned with Growing Futures Career Pathways and with the levels of the Quality Rating and Improvement project being piloted in Cass County. Career support may include the development of individual training plans, information about options and opportunities, CDA and accreditation support, and help in accessing various systems such as higher education and scholarship funds.

North Dakota colleges and universities provide program of study advising to support students who are completing a degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, and Career Centers at the institutions help students access job listings, evaluate their job skills and develop resumes. The Registry website currently under construction will include links to all state higher education institutions that offer a degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development with information on degree programs.

As a second phase of the Registry website development, resources will be added to help individuals prepare resumes and assemble a professional portfolio.

Learning Paths

A Learning Path is an individualized training plan that outlines Core Competency Training, other training approved for professional development, and the assessment and evaluative processes that lead to various professional designations, specializations, and credentials. This allows practitioners to plan ahead to achieve their goals, such as advancing on the Career Pathways, qualifying for a specific career position, and completing the training requirements for professional designations such as CDA and accreditation.

While all Learning Paths are based on the Core Competencies that are required for a career in the field of early childhood, each practitioner's Learning Path is unique to that person, based on individual career role and setting, goals, prior experiences, learning style and so on.

A Learning Path assists practitioners to be purposeful and intentional in their training so that their efforts are focused on the development of the skills and knowledge that best support their work and lead to demonstrated professional status. Purposeful planning of a Learning Path advances practitioners on the Career Pathways. Because the categories on the Career Pathways are linked to recognition and incentives, practitioners can be rewarded for completing professional development.

Multiple Delivery Methods

An effective professional development system supports the ongoing growth of all early childhood practitioners, at all levels of expertise. Professional growth means that practitioners are continually incorporating new knowledge and skill through an intentional, purposeful and coherent system of learning experiences. While these experiences may include a variety of methodologies, they must be consistently based in theory and research, tied to measurable outcomes, and designed to ensure that practitioners have the preparation they need to apply theory to practice. Learning experiences must also meet the practitioner where they are and be applicable to the practitioner's specific role and setting.

Professional development learning experiences include for-credit coursework completed at a college or university, community-based training sessions, mentoring and coaching, and other forms of technical assistance.

Informal Delivery System:

ND CCR&R is the primary provider of Core Competency Training that supports Career Pathways categories A-D, CDA training, and accreditation. Since 2008, ND CCR&R has been developing an online training delivery system to ensure that training is available and accessible in every area of the state as needed by individual practitioners. The ND CCR&R online system allows individuals to search for Core Competency Training and other CCR&R training events, register, and complete Core Competency Training courses independently online. Successfully completed training automatically updates the individual's training record. Individuals are able to print their own training certificates or training records whenever they choose. This delivery method features open registration so that training is available anytime and anywhere.

In addition, ND CCR&R has formed a partnership with the Minnesota CCR&R Network to deliver real-time online training using the Eager to Learn platform. These courses are offered over a six week period and involve interactions with an instructor and fellow students through message boards and chat sessions, reading and reflection assignments, and a final project. Eager to Learn courses are offered for CEUs.

The ND CCR&R CDA Training program is a comprehensive, packaged correspondence course that fully meets the national CDA education requirements. This course is available for open registration to allow practitioners to register and begin CDA training when they are ready. Once registered, the practitioner may download the course materials or print a paper copy, and complete the coursework at their own pace. The course is organized in three modules, each of which provides 45 clock hours of training. Practitioners may register for one, two or all three modules at a time, but completion of all three is required to fulfill the national CDA requirements.

Face-to-face workshops, seminars, conferences, and signature events are offered by ND CCR&R in the eight hub cities across the state. Face-to-face workshops and seminars are designed to present a full training curriculum over a multi-session period, usually a series of week nights or Saturday sessions, and may be offered for CEUs. Conferences and signature events feature regional and national content experts to bring cutting edge topics and national viewpoints to practitioners in the state.

Other community-based training opportunities are available around the state, sponsored by professional associations such as NDAEYC and NDCCPI, and by agencies such as NDSU Extension, food programs, SafeKids, and so on. These events may be applied toward professional development through the training approval process.

Formal Delivery System

A number of colleges and universities in North Dakota offer 2- and 4- year degree programs in Early Childhood Education and Child Development. A 1-year Early Childhood Certificate is also available. Some coursework is offered in distance and online formats. In addition, many institutions offer ongoing coursework through their Continuing Education Departments.

The Registry website is being designed to include a directory of state colleges and universities that offer degrees in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, with links to the contacts at those institutions.

The North Dakota Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium has developed a matrix of the degree programs offered at state colleges and universities, which includes delivery options available through each institution. The matrix will be available on the Registry website. The matrix also includes the non-credit ND CCR&R CDA Training Program options. *(See Appendix to find link to North Dakota Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium Matrix)*

Qualifications, Degrees, Credentials, and Pathways

Career Qualifications and Pathways

Growing Futures Career Pathways describe qualifications required for early care and education career positions. The pathways show the levels and content of training and education expected for specific careers. This can help early childhood professionals plan for increased qualifications and understand professional possibilities.

These Pathways apply to all early care and education professionals who work with young children in the preschool years, from teacher assistants to trainers and higher education faculty, family child care providers, Head Start staff, resource and referral staff, and program and school district administrators. The Career Pathways document is based on research in the field of early childhood practitioner preparation that shows quality care to be the direct result of intentional, purposeful training and education that emphasizes core knowledge and competencies.

The Career Pathways document can be useful in the following ways to:

- Help individuals in the field of early care and education answer the question, “How am I marketable?”
- Guide individuals in planning the steps to take to prepare for various positions
- Assist employers to write job descriptions and hire employees who are well qualified
- Give direction to training and education organizations to help them design programs that support career preparation based on clearly identified core content

The Career Pathways reflect and support several key initiatives including North Dakota’s Department of Human Services Licensing Rules, Early Childhood Core Competencies, the Growing Futures Professional Development plan, the Quality Rating and Improvement System currently being piloted in Cass County, Head Start 2007 Reauthorization Act, and the North Dakota Higher Education Consortium Articulation Agreement and Common Course Numbering guidelines.

This document lists a number of specific career positions and the required qualifications. Positions are listed by the qualifications considered to be entry level for that position. However, individuals may qualify for positions with higher qualifications. Career Pathways is not intended to be a complete list of every possible career in the field of early care and education. *(See Appendix to find link to Growing Futures Career Pathways)*

State and National Credentials

Credentials are documents certifying that an individual has met a defined set of requirements set forth by the organization granting the credential. Credentials can be awarded by a training, state department, or higher education institution. Persons receiving a credential must demonstrate understanding and competence of the educational requirements and skills needed for the specified credential. Persons applying for a credential must document their completed work and then have it verified by the entity issuing the credential. Most credentials are time limited and need to be renewed through training hours, additional coursework, or other professional activities.

State

Currently, a center director credential is being piloted in North Dakota using the Aim4Excellence program developed by the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University. Formal adoption of the credential in North Dakota is anticipated.

National

The most widely accepted professional credential in the field of early childhood is the Child Development Associate (CDA). The CDA is administered by the National Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, located in Washington DC. The Council sets the criteria for the CDA and awards the credential. The Growing Futures Career Pathways are designed to meet the national CDA education requirements and to support an increased number of practitioners who achieve the credential.

Accreditation

Accredited programs are those that have demonstrated a commitment to providing high quality care for children and service to their families as evaluated against national standards. The most widely recognized early childhood accreditation programs are administered by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC).

NAEYC Accreditation

NAEYC accreditation is a professionally sponsored, national, voluntary accreditation system for early childhood centers and schools. The accreditation process involves three steps:

- The program personnel conduct an in-depth self-study to determine how well the program meets the accreditation criteria, make any needed improvements, and then report compliance. The self-study is a comprehensive and internal evaluation of all aspects of the early childhood program. The self-study consists of classroom observations, an administrator's report, along with staff and parent questionnaires.
- Qualified early childhood specialists make an on-site validation visit. The purpose of the validation visit is to verify that the program's daily operations meet the accreditation criteria.
- A Commission convenes to consider the program's application and determine if the overall quality of the program merits accreditation.

NAFCC Accreditation

NAFCC Accreditation offers professional recognition to family and group child care providers who not only meet the child care standards by state licensing and registration agencies, but also have demonstrated a commitment to reach beyond the minimum requirements to achieve standards of excellence. Eligibility requirements are: 1) the applicant must have been caring for children as a family child care provider for at least 18 months, and 2) the applicant must meet state regulatory requirements. During the accreditation process, the provider goes through a self-assessment as well as validation by a parent and a NAFCC validator.

Technical assistance and financial support is available until June 2011 through ND CCR&R for programs that wish to pursue accreditation. Accreditation – both through NAEYC and NAFCC – corresponds to the highest level on the Quality Rating and Improvement scale, currently being piloted in Cass County.

Head Start Quality Assurance

Head Start Program Performance Standards; Head Start Act of 1997, Section 648A of the Head Start Act includes the requirements regarding staff qualifications. Included also is the requirement of 15 clock hours of classroom focused professional development per year.

Each year the Office of Head Start develops a Head Start Monitoring Protocol and Guides. The Protocol is designed and formatted to increase the efficiency and quality of field work. The Protocol organizes elements of program performance standards and other program regulation in 11 areas against which compliance will be monitored:

- Health Services
- Nutritional Services
- Safe Environments
- Transportation Services
- Disabilities Services
- Mental Health Services
- Family and Community Services
- Education and Early Childhood Development Services
- Fiscal Management
- Program Design and Management
- Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance

Compliance Questions form the basis of the Protocol, with each question focusing on one or more performance standards against which compliance will be monitored.

Targeted Questions facilitate the monitoring process for each Compliance Question. Review teams must respond to Compliance Questions using the prompts, which outline the minimum “evidence gathering” requirements in addressing questions effectively. The Targeted Questions indicate the people to interview, questions to ask, information to retrieve from documents, observations to conduct and management systems to analyze and summarize in developing an understanding of grantee compliance with each question. All of the evidence gathering questions must be completed in order to answer the associated question compliance question.

A series of tools are used to organize the evidence gathering process. These tools, which organize the Targeted Questions by method of data collection and source, include:

- Pre-Site Guides
- Interview Guides
- Observation Guides
- Document Review Guides
- Checklists (e.g. Safe Environment Checklists)
- Child and Staff File Review Guides
- Management Systems Analysis Guides

The evidence collected through each tool is linked to Compliance Questions and are used to assist review teams in making compliance determinations.

The Protocol gives grantees an opportunity to demonstrate compliance. Interviews are held with Head Start personnel who can answer the Compliance and Targeted questions most accurately and comprehensively. (Office of Head Start Monitoring System, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2010)

Each Early Head Start and Head Start Program undergoes a full review once every 3-years. A newly designated Early Head Start or Head Start agency has a review after the completion of their first year providing an Early Head Start and/or Head Start program. Follow up reviews include return visits to Head Start agencies with 1 or more findings of deficiencies, no later than 6 months after the Secretary provides notification of such findings, or no later than 12 months after such notification if the Secretary determines that additional time is necessary for an agency to address such a deficiency prior to the review. (See Appendix to find link to *Head Start Staff Qualifications*)

Degrees, Endorsements, and Licensures

Degrees

A degree is an award conferred by a college or university signifying that the recipient has satisfactorily completed a course of study. Typically, the course of study includes several requirements for graduation, such as university and departmental requirements as well as the specific requirements of the student's major or program area.

An Undergraduate degree refers to either a 2- year Associates degree (A.A and A.A.S.) or a 4- year Bachelors degree (B.A or B.S.). A Graduate degree refers to a degree pursued after having completed an Undergraduate degree. Graduate degrees include a Masters (usually an additional 2-3 years beyond the Undergraduate degree) or Doctorate (usually an additional 4 years beyond the Undergraduate degree).

A degree is required to be licensed to teach in a public school Pre-K or Kindergarten program. The 2007 Head Start Reauthorization Act has also increased the qualifications for those who wish to teach in a Head Start program. Under the Reauthorization Act, practitioners are required to have a minimum of a CDA Credential to teach in an Early Head Start classroom and a minimum of an Associates degree to teach in a Head Start classroom. By September 30, 2013 at least fifty percent of Head Start teachers nationwide in center-based programs must have a Bachelors degree. The Career Pathways provide specific information on qualifications.

North Dakota colleges and universities offer a range of Early Childhood and Child Development degree options. The North Dakota Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium has developed a matrix of the degree programs offered at state colleges and universities. (See Appendix to find link to *North Dakota Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium Matrix*)

Licensure

Licensure is required to teach in any public school in North Dakota. Teacher licensure for in-state graduates or graduates of out-of-state programs requires a minimum of a bachelor's degree from a state agency-approved teacher education program. The approved program must include a general studies component, a North Dakota recognized program area major, and a professional pedagogy core as defined in the North Dakota standards for teacher education program approval. Applications for licensure are through the ND Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB).

Endorsement

An endorsement is a licensure option in which an individual already licensed to teach in North Dakota may add qualification to the license. An individual must have appropriate coursework, teaching methods, field experience and student teaching experience at the appropriate age level. The North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board determine if the individual meets the program approval standards and other licensure requirements as specified by ESBP.

Articulation and Equivalencies

The North Dakota University System's Office of Articulation and Transfer, and the North Dakota Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium maintain the Statewide Early Childhood Education Articulation Agreement through an annual review and update. The North Dakota Early Childhood Education Articulation Agreement exists between the four year Institutions of Higher Education, the two year Community Colleges and the Tribal Colleges that offer early childhood degrees. The Presidents of the colleges and universities sign the articulation agreement on an annual basis. Common course numbering has been implemented for key foundational courses and is used to identify coursework on the Career Pathway.

Credit for Prior Learning

Credit for prior learning is the process used by higher education institutions to grant college credit for learning acquired through life or work experiences, or for informal training. North Dakota colleges and universities have implemented programs that award credit for prior learning administered on a case-by-case basis dependent on what the learning activity is and whether it constitutes college-level learning. The determination to award credit for prior learning is made by the Registrars Office at each institution.

In addition, a number of North Dakota colleges and universities are included on the list of institutions at the National Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction (PONSI). This means the institutions have reported a willingness to consider awarding credit for courses evaluated by PONSI. Inclusion on this list does not mean that an institution automatically awards the credit recommended. *(A list of participating North Dakota higher education institutions can be found at http://www.nationalponsi.org/colleges/list_of_colleges_north_dakota.htm)*

CDA Articulation

The North Dakota Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium is discussing a process for articulation of a current CDA credential to the colleges and universities that offer early childhood education degrees.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance in a professional development system ensures the quality of professional development experiences and provides mechanisms to measure achievement. The Growing Futures Professional Development System has been designed to incorporate several quality assurance strategies, including establishing standards for training approval and qualifications for trainers, developing procedures to verify documents submitted for inclusion on individual training records, conducting evaluations of training, and support for national program accreditation. In addition, the state is currently piloting a Quality Rating and Improvement System that is closely linked to the Growing Futures Career Pathways.

Approval Processes

Approval of training and trainers is an essential strategy to ensure that professional development activities are appropriate, support the Core Competencies and Early Learning Guidelines, and lead to meaningful progression on the Career Pathways. While the content of professional development activities is important, the experience is not meaningful to participants unless it is delivered by a skilled trainer who understands the audience and is capable of facilitating adult learning. A combination of approved training content and trainers can help ensure that trainings and coursework are of high quality.

Training Approval

As described throughout this document, criteria and standards for training approval have been developed and approved by the Growing Futures Professional Development Stakeholders group. These standards are linked to the Core Competencies and principles of good practice as well as adult learning. The approval of training is critical to ensure that the content delivered is appropriate, up to date, and linked to other standards as prioritized by the professional development and overall early childhood system.

As part of the development of the Registry website, an easy, accessible online application and approval process is being created. Agencies and entities that wish to have their training approved and promoted for professional development purposes will be able to submit an online application which will automatically be evaluated against the approval criteria and standards. Applications that meet the criteria will be posted to the online calendar for instant access to practitioners. Registrations for approved training will be processed through the Registry so that the training automatically posts to the individual training records, ensuring that records are accurate and complete.

Processes have also been developed by which professional development that was not pre-approved (such as professional development completed in another state or attendance at a national conference) could be added to an individual's training record.

Trainer Approval

An important component of professional development is a process for trainer approval that includes standards and criteria for leveling trainers, and trainer skill development. Quality training relies on trainers who have both content knowledge and training skills. Training sessions are not meaningful to participants if the person presenting the training fails to understand the audience needs or to support adult learning.

At this time, the process for trainer approval is under development. However, Growing Futures trainer levels are identified on the Career Pathways and the Growing Futures Professional Development Stakeholder Committee approved the data fields configured in the Registry database for tracking trainer qualifications.

In addition, ND CCR&R has been piloting a system of trainer approval, including trainer levels and mentoring, for a number of years. All ND CCR&R trainers who present Eager to Learn online course must first attend a six-week Effective Practices course and complete a mentorship prior to solo training.

Data Collection and Reporting

The Growing Futures Registry will be the primary repository for gathering and storing data related to professional development.

Data on individuals working in early childhood will be solicited through an application process, and will include:

- Demographics (Name, previous last name, contact information including email, race/ethnicity, birth date, gender, primary language)
- Role (Employment status, employer's name, employer contact information, employer license type, current position)
- Qualifications (Highest education achieved, major if degreed, certifications and licensures including CDA, date awarded)
- Specific Training and Education record (Institution granting highest level of education, date achieved, # of EC-related college credits, # of training hours attended in past year)

The information collected on individuals will also be collected for trainers who deliver training content marketed through the Growing Futures Registry, and will also include:

- Trainer qualifications such as Adult Learning Theory and presentation skills

Data on training delivered will include:

- Course length, format and attendance
- Trainer qualifications
- Location
- Target audience
- Course competency area
- Sponsoring organization

The Registry data will be collected, verified, and maintained as defined by the National Registry Alliance best practices to allow North Dakota to share its data for national reporting purposes and to ensure data privacy and protection. Verification of qualifications such as credentials and education will be based on original documentation, and copies of verification documents will be maintained in e-files whenever possible.

Data on the majority of early childhood programs is currently maintained by CCR&R and can be cross-populated with Registry data. Annual reports will be generated to inform readers of the progression of the professional development of the early childhood workforce in North Dakota.

Quality Rating and Improvement System

According to the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, Quality Rating and Improvements Systems (QRIS) are improving the level of quality in early care and education in several states. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, QRIS award quality ratings to early care and education programs.

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems have five common elements:

- Standards include levels beyond licensing standards, with incremental progression to the highest QRIS level.
- Accountability measures are used to determine the extent to which programs meet QRIS standards and to assign ratings.
- Program and practitioner outreach and supports promote participation and help programs meeting higher standards. Supports may include training, technical assistance, consultation and mentorship programs.
- Financing incentives specifically linked to quality standards may include quality improvement grants, scholarships, low-interest loans, and professional recognition.
- Parent education explains overall quality as well as specific QRIS ratings so parents and guardians can make informed child care decisions.

QRIS can help maximize resources, inform the public about quality early childhood programming, and align efforts related to licensing, standards, professional development and program accountability.

The original Growing Futures plan envisioned a QRIS as a major component of the state's professional development system. In late 2007, North Dakota's Department of Human Services convened a group of stakeholders to begin planning its QRIS system. The group developed guiding principles including the following:

- QRIS is voluntary
- Adequate supports – both financial and infrastructure – are necessary to encourage and support practitioners toward quality improvement
- Successful QRIS programs required communication, collaboration, and consensus among families, agencies, communities, and early care and education practitioners

The goals of the ND QRIS are:

- To guide and support early care and education programs to continually improve the quality of care
- To empower and equip families to make informed decisions
- To establish an accountability system to measure and impact the quality of care and education

In June, 2008, an initial draft of the QRIS model and standards was completed. It includes five steps within each of the five Categories of Standards:

1. Health, Safety and Nutrition
2. Knowledgeable and Responsible Adults/Caregivers
3. Relationships and Interactions
4. Connections with Families and Communities
5. Learning Environment and Curriculum

Step 1 focuses on assuring that participating programs are in compliance with licensing standards and are familiar with state-generated resources and tools.

Step 2 launches participants on a training path that is aligned with the Growing Futures Career Pathways and is customized to their role in a child care program. Much of the identified training is available online to be accessible at any time and from any location.

Step 3 encourages programs to complete a self-assessment using an environmental rating scale to identify areas that could use improvement and connects them with a coach to draft an implementation plan that will help them reach their goals. A complete implementation plan may qualify the program for assistance to support changes.

Steps 4 and 5 involve a program assessment conducted by an objective assessor, and also reviews the learning activities occurring in the program.

In November, 2009, the United Way of Cass Clay funded Lakes & Prairies Child Care Resource and Referral to conduct a 2-year pilot of the QRIS in Cass County. The Pilot QRIS builds on this Professional Development Plan by integrating the Career Pathways into the five steps of the Knowledgeable and Responsible Adults and Caregivers, and provides incentives to motivate participants to meet the benchmarks set in each step (Visit www.ndgrowingfutures.org/Stars/ to view *QRIS Pilot Criteria*)

Evaluation

Evaluation plays an essential role in effective professional development systems. Ideally, evaluations are planned for an overall system, built into each element and/or component, and are part of an iterative process that continually informs and improves the system. State professional development systems often set varied goals for the overall system and its inter-related components, and employ a range of evaluation methods to assess achievement of these goals. Logic and theory of change models can be useful tools for system evaluation. Performance-based contracts for operation of professional development systems or specific elements or components embed evaluations and goal achievement. As system-level or component plans are developed, initial data can be gathered to serve as benchmarks for later collections. In addition, data and evaluations from those involved (both participants and trainers) can also instruct planning and revision processes. While participant evaluations have a long history in professional development activities, system, element, and component evaluations are still being refined. Part of this refinement includes developing standard definitions and measurements of professional development—a local and national challenge.

Supports and Financing

Professional Recognition

Recognition for experience and years of service are features of the Growing Futures plan. As part of the original plan, a system of recognition was drafted. Based on a point system, individuals are recognized for a combination of experience, education, training, and professional membership. It is proposed that cash incentives ranging from \$500 to \$1000 be awarded. Additional recognition benefits could include discounts on training and recognition certificates. (See Appendix for draft *Recognition Matrix and Incentives*)

Benefits and Incentives

To address the high turnover rates of staff who work in early childhood programs, many states offer a comprehensive package of supports and financing. Financial support assures that participants in the professional development system can afford to pursue available opportunities, and access must be addressed so that opportunities are equal across the state.

In 2010, the following incentives are available:

- Free and low-cost training is available through CCR&R in a self-paced online, on-demand format. All courses may be applied toward the education requirements of the national CDA Credential. In addition, the cost to deliver Eager to Learn multi-week synchronous online courses is being subsidized to make this format affordable to interested participants.
- CDA scholarships of \$600 to \$1,000 to support training costs or direct assessment and advisor fees are available through CCR&R via an application process.
- Through CCR&R's Growing Child Care initiative, center directors may be supported to attain their Center Director credential or a center may pursue accreditation. Program incentives valued up to \$9,500 will be provided to support their business plan. Family and group child care providers, as well as center staff, may apply to earn their CDA credential or become accredited and will qualify for \$1,500 to \$2,400 in program incentives.
- The QRIS Pilot Project includes implementation grants to support participating programs in meeting the QRIS criteria. Programs that successfully reach Steps 4 or 5 qualify for quality awards that may be used to support increased compensation.
- Individuals who wish to enroll at a higher education institution may qualify for federal financial aid. Grants, loans, and work-study are the three major forms of aid available through the Federal Government. Information about Federal financial aid is available at <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp>.
- Child care providers might be able to have a portion of their undergraduate Federal Family Education Loan or Direct Stafford Loan forgiven. Eligibility requirements include having received an associate's or bachelor's degree in early childhood education and having worked full time for 2 consecutive years as a provider in an eligible child care facility that serves a low-income community. Information about the Child Care Provider Loan Forgiveness Program is available at <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/childcare.jsp?tab=repaying>.

Other states have implemented a variety of supports to strengthen their professional development systems, including:

- Tiered reimbursement: the most common financial incentive related to QRIS is tiered subsidy reimbursements—higher quality programs can be paid higher reimbursement rates for the children in their program who receive child care assistance (if the program charges tuition at or above that higher reimbursement rate). Most of the States with a QRIS include tiered reimbursement in their systems, but several other States also pay higher subsidy reimbursement rates based on the quality of the program. In these States, the measure of quality is typically national accreditation.
- T.E.A.C.H.® Scholarships: this umbrella of scholarship programs for teachers, directors, and family child care providers working in regulated child care programs in 21 States across the country. All T.E.A.C.H. scholarships link continuing education with increased compensation and require recipients and their sponsoring child care programs to share the cost. Students are reimbursed for out-of-pocket educational expenses including tuition, enrollment fees, and books. Research about this project has shown that providers who have received T.E.A.C.H. scholarships stay in the field longer and obtain higher compensation.
- Compensation initiatives: these initiatives usually entail annual monetary supplements to providers' salaries that are awarded based on the highest level of training and education providers have achieved. As practitioners increase levels of education, the amount of the supplement rises.
- Tax credits: tax credits can be established for people who spend their own money on training and education, with the stipulation that they work in child care programs. State tax revenues, in the form of general funds, are also a common funding source for State professional development initiatives.

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Appendix

- **Reference Documents**

- **Career Pathways**
- **Registry Application**
- **Trainer Approval Application and Process**
- **Training Approval Application and Process**
- **ND Core Competencies for Early Care and Education**
- **ND Early Learning Guidelines Birth to Three**
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- **50037 Early Childhood Teacher Education Standards**
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Reference Documents

Career Pathways

Growing Futures Career Pathways outline standards for professional preparation and ongoing development by describing qualifications required for early care and education career positions. The Pathways show the levels and content of training and education expected for specific careers.

View the most updated copy of the Growing Futures Career Pathways at:

www.ndgrowingfutures.org

Registry Application and Process

Individuals who choose to participate in Growing Futures and all individuals who wish to be approved as trainers must first complete a full Registry application.

View the Registry Application and process at: www.ndgrowingfutures.org

Trainer Approval Application and Process

Individuals who wish to provide training to early childhood caregivers and teachers must be approved to do so prior to submitting training events for approval. Approval processes are in place for Early Childhood Education trainers as well as for Specialty trainers.

View the Trainer Approval Application and process at:

www.ndgrowingfutures.org

Training Approval Application and Process

The Growing Futures system is the process used by the ND Department of Human Services to approve training used toward license renewal. All training must be submitted for approval prior to delivery. Only approved training will appear on an individual's training record.

View the Training Approval Application and process at:

www.ndgrowingfutures.org

ND Core Competencies for Early Care and Education

View and download copies of the ND Core Competencies for Early Care and Education at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/family.html>

ND Early Learning Guidelines Birth to Three

View and download copies of the ND Early Learning Guidelines Birth to Three at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/family.html>

ND Early Learning Guidelines Three to Five

View and download copies of the ND Early Learning Guidelines Three to Five at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/family.html>

50037 Early Childhood Teacher Education Standards

View a copy of the standards at <http://www.nd.gov/esp/progapproval/docs/50037.pdf>

North Dakota Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium Matrix

The Matrix lists the North Dakota institutions that offer early childhood degree programs and agencies that offer training toward credentials.

View a copy of the Matrix at www.ndgrowingfutures.org

Head Start and Early Head Start Teacher Qualifications Requirements

The Head Start Reauthorization Act establishes qualifications for teachers in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

View and download these qualifications at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/policy/im2008/acfimhs_08_12.html

QRIS Pilot Criteria

The criteria for the pilot QRIS project are available at www.ndgrowingfutures.org

Key Assumptions of North Dakota's Early Childhood Professional Development Plan

North Dakota's Early Childhood Professional Development Plan is based on several key assumptions, which govern our understanding of the needs of children and families, and of the responsibility and public trust placed on the field of early childhood to meet these needs. Key assumptions include:

KEY ASSUMPTION #1: The factors that result in healthy child growth and development are the same across all early childhood settings.

Care providers in all settings---licensed family child care, center-based care, Head Start, and public schools, rural and urban, large and small---must be grounded in the same core knowledge and demonstrate the same fundamental skills and attributes that lead to positive child outcomes. An understanding of the core knowledge and principles that define the field of early childhood is essential to direct care providers as well as to those in administrative, support, education, and specialized roles. (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992; NAEYC, 1994)

KEY ASSUMPTION #2: Children are developing, growing, and learning at all times, in all settings.

Children's growth, development, and learning are not limited to certain times of the day or to certain locations. Children do not suddenly begin to learn when they enter public school. In fact, children are learning at all times. Every experience, interaction, and relationship teaches the child something about the world and their ability to function in it. The question we must ask is not where children learn but rather *what* children learn across all settings. As an early childhood community and as a state, we want to ensure that all of our children are cared for in environments that foster successful development and learning, and that lead to positive outcomes for every child. These environments are not "optimum" or "desirable;" rather they are the necessary conditions for healthy human growth and development. (Bowman & Stott, 1994; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Ramey & Ramey, 2005; Shore, 1997)

KEY ASSUMPTION #3: The training and education of care providers is the number one indicator of child care quality.

Credible, meaningful, rigorous, and ongoing training and education of care providers is the key to better environments for our children. No one ever knows all there is to know about child development and good practice, and new information is continually emerging. Individuals who care for our children and/or work in the field of early childhood should possess the knowledge and skills needed to provide our children with safe, healthy learning environments. Training and education are ongoing processes for all care providers in the early childhood field. (Bredekamp, 1989; Howes, C., M. Whitebook, & D. Phillips, 1992; Hyson, M., 2003;

KEY ASSUMPTION #4: Experience, based on developmentally appropriate practices, is the key to better environments for our children.

Research clearly shows that longevity alone is not an indicator of quality early care. In fact, research suggests that the longer an individual provides care with proper training in good practice, the more firmly entrenched they become in appropriate practices (Bredenkamp, & Copple, 1997; Dunn, L. 1993; Galinsky et al, 1994; Kagan and Newton, 1989; Kontos, 1994; Kontos and Fiene, 1987; Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997; Ruopp, Travers, Glantz & Coelen, 1979; Whitebrook et al 1990).

KEY ASSUMPTION #5: Specific careers require specific knowledge and skill.

To qualify for most professional positions, specific skills and knowledge are required. For example, to be an instructor at a college requires an advanced degree and other specific skills. To be center director requires knowledge of child development as well as knowledge of financial management, personnel, labor laws, and other knowledge unique to the position. North Dakota's *Early Growing Futures* Professional Development Plan details the education, skills, and knowledge that specific careers in the field of early childhood require and sets a standard for career positions. (DeBord & Sawyers, 1996; Howes, Whitebook, & Phillips, 1992; Howes, 1997; Hyson, M., 2003; Kontos, Howes, & Galinsky, 1997)

KEY ASSUMPTION #6: Professional development is an investment with solid returns.

Clearly, the training and education of early childhood care providers results in positive returns for the children in care and gives families using child care more quality choices. Just as clearly, training and education result in positive returns for early childhood care providers; when a person invests in them self, they expand their options and opportunities and come to see themselves in new and exciting ways. Finally, professional development is an investment for our state--a better trained workforce results in solid economic returns and adds to the quality of life available in North Dakota. (Barnett & Hustedt, 2003; Bracey, 2003; Fassinger, Jenson, and Rathge, 2004; Peisner-Feinberg et al, 2000; Weaver, 2002; Whitebook, et. al., 1990)

Glossary of Terms

Articulation: Agreements or links between training and education systems that allow credits taken from one system to be transferred to and applied at another system

Apprentice: An individual registered with the federal Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training to complete the two-year apprenticeship training program as described in the state Apprenticeship Standards

Apprenticeship: The two-year period of education and on-the-job training that registered apprentices complete, as described in the state Apprenticeship Standards

Apprenticeship Sponsor Site: A child care program that has agreed to abide by the state Apprenticeship Standards to train and mentor apprentices, and which has registered with the federal Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training

Archibald Bush Foundation: A grant funding organization with interests in areas related to child development and the training of early care and education practitioners

Career Support or Advising: A process in which knowledgeable advisors help practitioners recognize and set individual professional goals and access systems to meet those goals

Child Care Development Specialist (CCDS): The federal Department of Labor credential earned by individuals who successfully complete a registered apprenticeship program

CCR&R: Child Care Resource and Referral. Part of a national network of CCR&R agencies designed to help families, child care providers, and communities find, provide, and plan for affordable, quality child care.

CDA: Child Development Associate. A nationally recognized early childhood professional credential awarded to individuals who successfully complete the nationally established requirements of the CDA program to work with children ages birth to five years

CDA Advisor: An individual who meets the nationally established qualifications to serve as an advisor to CDA candidates

CDA Functional Area: The domains of child development and early childhood programming that define the CDA approach to training and skills building

Code of Ethics: The agreed upon standards for professional behavior and decision making that direct the work of practitioners in the field, and codified by the National Association for the Education of Young Children

CEUs: Continuing Education Units, typically issued by higher education institutions. They may be obtained at conferences of professional education organizations and may be applied to renewal of professional credentials such as the CDA or may be required for renewal of various certificates and licensures

Core Body of Knowledge: The research-based knowledge that informs the field of early childhood and child development and directs the core, or essential, knowledge that early childhood care providers should learn and apply

Core Competencies: Eight contents areas that describe the knowledge and skills required of practitioners in the field of early care and education. Each content area is organized in five levels from entry in the field to the more advanced knowledge and skills possessed by a professional with a master's degree

Core Competency Training: Approximately 120 hours of training specific to the Core Competencies and designed to ensure that practitioners are well grounded in the knowledge and skills required early childhood practitioners

Curriculum: The foundational knowledge base for the early childhood profession. Also refers to an organized framework that delineates the content that children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, what caregivers/teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur. A developmentally appropriate curriculum is one that is based on the developmental stages of young children

Credential: A professional award given for successful completion of pre-determined requirements and qualifications

Early Childhood: The period of life from birth to age eight

Environmental Rating Scale: The nationally recognized set of observation tools used to assess the quality of early childhood and school age care environments

ESPB: North Dakota's Education Standards and Practices Board

Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Research-based effective and respectful caregiving and teaching practices that are based on the developmental stages of young children and which have been shown to support positive outcomes for children

Fieldwork: A supervised or mentored caregiving or teaching experience in the field, working with young children and their families

Head Start: A federally funded early childhood and family support program

Licensing Rules and Regulations: The laws established by the ND state legislature that govern the direct care of young children in formal and informal child care settings and administered through the ND Department of Human Services

Licensed Family Child Care Provider: An individual licensed by the state to provide care for up to 7 children including their own in the individual's home

Licensed Group Child Care Provider: A program licensed by the state to care for 8-18 children including their own. May require a second caregiver

NDAEYC: North Dakota Association for the Education of Young Children. The state affiliate of the national early childhood professional organization called the Association for the Education of Young Children

NDCCPI: North Dakota Child Care Providers Incorporated, an independent association for child care providers

NDDHS: North Dakota Department of Human Services

NDECHEC: North Dakota Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium

ND Head Start Collaboration Office: The state Head Start office designed to create a visible presence at the state level to assist in the development of the significant, multi-agency and public-private partnerships between Head Start and the state.

Para-professional: An individual who assists in working with children and families under the direction of a qualified teacher or other professional

PITC: The standardized training curriculum for caregivers of infants and toddlers, developed by the Program for Infant Toddler Caregiver (PITC), and delivered in North Dakota as a state training initiative

Portfolio: A collection of work that demonstrates knowledge of a particular area and/or growth and development over time

QRIS: Quality Rating and Improvement System

Registry: A system to track and document professional development, including education and other professional accomplishments. A registry might also be used to track and advertise available training and education opportunities

Stake holder: Individuals or organizations that have a vested interest in a particular subject or project

Trainer, Level 1- 4: Refers to the system of professional development for early childhood trainers that links trainer education, experience and other demonstrated skills to training delivery

History of Professional Development Planning in North Dakota

For a number of years, the need for a early childhood professional development system has been recognized by early childhood practitioners and entities in North Dakota. This section briefly chronicles the professional development efforts that have taken place in our state over the past decade.

1992 The Visioning Plan

The early childhood community develops a five-year plan for early childhood in North Dakota. Plan developers identify professional development as a key issue to be addressed and call for the following action:

- Develop and implement an Early Childhood Development Plan to establish that early childhood professional standards, preparation and compensation will be on a par with other similar professions.
- Encourage the development of certification and endorsements/credentials for early childhood educators teaching children, birth through age eight. The endorsements will be for teachers of children ages 0-3, 3-5, and 5-8, and credentials will be for teachers of children in early childhood special education ages 0-3 and 3-8.
- Ensure that all training opportunities in North Dakota will be available to early childhood care providers.

1993 The Bush Foundations funds the Infant-Toddler Training Project

The North Dakota Department of Human Services receives funding from the Bush Foundation to establish an infant-toddler child care provider training delivery system throughout the state inclusive of the four tribal reservations.

1995 The North Dakota Associations for the Education of Young Children (NDAEYC) creates a professional development plan for early childhood professionals

1996 The North Dakota Child Care Providers Incorporated (NDCCPI) creates a professional development plan for family child care providers

1997 Training requirements for licensed child care providers are increased

1999 Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) develops a professional development plan for all early childhood practitioners, begins to level core curriculum to identify training gaps, implements trainer qualification criteria, and establishes the CCR&R Training Approval Board

2000 Head Start mandates that 50% of teaching staff hold Associate degrees by 2003

Growing Futures: the early childhood community develops a five-year plan for early childhood in North Dakota

In 2000, representatives from North Dakota's early childhood community assembled to define a new plan to move early childhood services forward in the

coming five-years. The planning process, funded by the North Dakota Head Start Collaborative Office, identified “improving the status of child care professional” as a major goal and formulated action steps to address the issue, including:

- Review, revise, and implement career development plans for early care and education professionals
- Formulate a career development plan for early childhood licensors
- Coordinate and share available training opportunities
- Develop an articulation plan to address the continuity of higher education in the early childhood field
- Develop comprehensive trainings that address specialized issues and needs
- Strengthen and expand delivery systems that enable optimum accessibility to quality early childhood training and education
- Develop a comprehensive system of financial support for early childhood professional development

The first Professional Development stake holder’s meeting held

To begin the work identified in the *Growing Futures* planning document, the Head Start Collaboration Office funded a professional development “kick-off” meeting designed to be highly participatory. The stake holders, representing the early childhood community from across the state, developed a vision for early childhood professional development in North Dakota and identified core values, including:

- Early childhood programs will provide quality care and education through well-prepared professionals grounded in principles of child development
- There will be a clearly defined early childhood care and education system that coordinates, links, and tracks the opportunities for training and education of early childhood professionals
- There will be multiple pathways for acquiring the qualifications necessary for early childhood professional (CDA, Associate degrees, Bachelors degrees, and advanced degrees)
- There will be articulation agreements between and among Child Care Resource and Referral, tribal colleges, and the state’s higher education system including private colleges and universities
- There will be monetary incentives for early childhood care and education care providers who continue training in early childhood and scholarships for those who continue their training and education
- There will be an accessible statewide system that tracks all approved early childhood training offered throughout the state
- Guidelines regarding positive work conditions for early childhood professionals will be developed and promoted

2002 The Bush Foundation funds professional development planning efforts

The North Dakota Early Childhood Professional Development Project is created to formulate a comprehensive professional development plan for the field of early childhood in North Dakota. The North Dakota Professional Development Leadership Team serves as a steering committee for the effort.

The second Professional Development stake holder's meeting is held, gathering stake holders from throughout the state to provide an update on the progress of the Early Childhood Professional Development Project.

The U.S. Department of Labor awards North Dakota Department of Human Services the Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship Grant to establish and early childhood apprenticeship project in the state.

Natural Allies is created to prepare professional to work with children with disabilities in natural settings.

2003 The North Dakota Early Childhood Professional Development Project releases a draft early childhood professional development plan and request input from the broader early childhood community. Focus groups were held across the state.

The stake holders met to review the draft professional development plan based on the focus group data. A revision writing team was established to revise the plan to better reflect the input from gathered from the focus groups and stake holders.

An grant request for the implementation of the early childhood professional development plan was submitted to the Bush Foundation and was not funded.

2004 The writing team met throughout the year to attempt to rework the professional development plan, under the direction of the Professional Development Task Force Steering Committee.

2005 Dan Haggard, Director of New Mexico's Department of Child Development, met with stake holders to consult on North Dakota's professional development plan.

The writing team presented the first draft of the professional development plan to the Steering Committee in October.

The Professional Development Task Force outlined the functions of the Growing Futures office. Functions include the following:

- Manage career counseling
 - Administer the individual training needs assessments
 - Connect individuals to applicable training and support services
 - Serve as liaison with training and educational institutions and systems
- Administer the clearinghouse of training information
 - Gather and publicize applicable training and education
- Administer the training registry
- Administer scholarship and incentive funds
- Facilitate trainer and training approval processes

2006 A revised draft of the professional development was presented to the Steering Committee in January.

2007 **Head Start Reauthorization Act increased education qualifications for teaching staff to include Bachelor degrees for lead teachers.**

Professional Development Stakeholder Committee established work groups. These groups worked to establish the approaches and procedures that would be incorporated as part of the state professional development system including the processes for training approval, trainer approval, and Registry website development.

The Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium worked with its members to identify common course numbering for early childhood courses, develop a matrix of state schools, and establish an articulation process for articulating a CDA Credential to an Early Childhood Education degree program.

Early Learning Guidelines were drafted.

2008 **Early Learning Guidelines were completed.**

Core Competencies were adopted from Minnesota.

CCR&R developed and began to pilot a database capable of providing Registry functions.

Training approval criteria were accepted by the Professional Development Stakeholder Committee.

CCR&R launched its online training system.

2009 **A Quality Rating and Improvement System was defined.** Lakes and Prairies CCR&R received funding from United Way of Cass and Clay Counties to pilot the QRIS.

The Professional Development writing team was reconvened to begin the process of updating the Growing Futures plan to reflect all the work that had been done since the last draft.

The Career Pathways document was developed to include career qualifications for Head Start (reflecting the 2007 Reauthorization Act) and the QRIS criteria.

The ND Legislature (insert identifying info on the bill 1418.....)

2010 **QRIS is piloted in Cass County.**

The Registry website is under development at www.ndgrowingfutures.org