

Director's Guide to 'Oklahoma Core Competencies'

Need help writing job descriptions?

Need ideas for interviewing
job applicants?

Looking for words to use with staff
evaluations and professional
development plans?

Wondering how to help your staff
decide what training to attend?

If so, the Core Competencies
are for you!



**Child Care
Services**

What are Core Competencies?

“Competency” means demonstration of skills. “Core” means the central, innermost or most essential part of anything. “Practitioner” refers to an adult who puts knowledge into practice. Early childhood programs serve children, ages birth through age 5. Out-of-school-time programs serve children and youth attending public or private schools.

The Oklahoma Core Competencies focus on the most essential skills needed by adults to provide, or put into practice, quality early care and education for all children.

Said another way, the Core Competencies describe what your classroom staff needs to know and be able to do to help children learn and develop. Staff skilled in the Core Competencies can result in:

- ◆ A higher-quality program
- ◆ Better outcomes for children
- ◆ More satisfied parents
- ◆ Better understanding of expectations of staff
- ◆ Greater job satisfaction for your staff

Who Developed the Core Competencies and Why?

Professionals from across our state with education and experience caring for children of all ages volunteered to help staff of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services write both the “The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners” and “The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Out-of-School-Time Practitioners.”

The purpose was to create a common language or framework for describing the range of observable skills needed by individuals caring for and educating children. These individuals

might work in a child care center, family child care home, Head Start/Early Head Start program, prekindergarten classroom, public school, youth club, summer camp or other settings.

The Core Competencies documents are important for classroom or home care staff, educators, designers of college courses, conference sponsors and others.

However, perhaps the person this document will benefit the most is **you, the director** of an early care and education or out-of-school-time program.

The quality of your program rests squarely on your staff's understanding of and ability to meet the needs of children. Their skill at understanding children's cues, responding consistently and respectfully, and forming warm, caring relationships makes a big difference in how well the children in your program thrive and develop.



Because of this, selecting, training, supervising and evaluating staff are critical responsibilities for you as a director. The Core Competencies provide you with a framework on which to base this important work.

What Skills are Discussed in the Oklahoma Core Competencies?

Oklahoma has divided the Core Competencies into content areas.

The content areas include:

- Child growth and development
- Health, safety and nutrition
- Child observation and assessment
- Family and community partnerships
- Learning environments and curriculum
- Interactions with children
- Program planning, development and evaluation
- Professionalism and leadership
- Family, school and community relationships (in out-of-school competencies only)

To view the full text of the “Oklahoma Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners” and “The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Out-of-School-Time Practitioners” go to www.okdhs.org/library/publications.

Tell Me More!

Core Competencies are clearly spelled out to provide a common foundation for professional development in our state. For example, trainers, educators and instructors can plan workshops and courses that meet specific content areas of the Core Competencies. Below are ideas for using the Core Competencies to help you be even more effective in your job as director.

Use the Core Competencies for:

Interviewing

- ◆ Develop questions for jobs requiring different levels of skills – for example, an entry level versus a master level teacher
- ◆ Develop questions in each of the eight content areas

Developing job descriptions and professional development policies

- ◆ Clarify knowledge and skills required of staff positions
- ◆ Define content areas in which you expect your staff to obtain training

Evaluating

- ◆ Help staff self-assess their competency level in the eight content areas
- ◆ Assess current staff and identify training and development needs

Helping teachers write professional development plans

- ◆ Help individual staff write their own professional development plans based on needs for increasing expertise in the eight content areas
- ◆ Help staff create a formal record of professional development completed; track by content area and skill level

Training

- ◆ Assist your staff in choosing trainings to attend
- ◆ Guide staff meetings and in-service training to ensure all content areas are covered

Workshops, conference sessions and other professional development activities are identified by a specific Core Competency.

Other publications that may be helpful to you are the “Oklahoma Early Learning Guidelines for Children: Ages 3 Through 5” and the “Oklahoma Early Learning Guidelines for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos: Ages 0 Through 36 Months.” As the Core Competencies describe what adults need to know and be able to do to support children’s learning, the Early Learning Guidelines provide guidance to teachers about what children should know and be able to do to experience school success.

Out-of-school-time program providers may consult the Oklahoma Academic Standards developed by the Oklahoma State Department of Education for ideas to support school-aged children’s development and learning.

Introducing your staff to the Core Competencies and including them in your discussions of professional development now will help your employees keep in step with progress in their field. Before long, your staff will be taking an increasingly active role in mapping out their own course of professional development.



Child Care Services

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