

# Professional Development Definition Guide

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Below is the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) list of definitions for the Professional Development Team, inclusive of other early learning terminology, organized in alphabetical order.

## Definitions

- **Academic Advising.** A process of meeting with an advisor at a college or university to plan academic goals and create an education plan.
- **Academic Term.** A timeframe during which an education institution holds courses and divides the academic year. Terms may be quarters (9-12 weeks), semesters (15-16 weeks), or trimesters (10-14 weeks).
- **Aligned Credits.** A collection of college credits recognized as an equivalent for DCYF that provides similar knowledge and skill as one of the Washington State Early Childhood Education (ECE) Stackable Certificates.
- **Alternative Credential.** An equivalent option for early learning providers to meet their licensing education requirement through ECE related degrees, aligned college credits, or through a DCYF-recognized certificate or credential.
- **Annual.** For the state-approved training program, annual refers to the calendar year, January 1 through December 31.
- **Articulation Fee.** Any fees required by the institution for the review and transfer of college credits from another institution. Colleges also may provide a Prior Learning Assessment to award credit for prior learning. Speak with the college to find out their individual process and cost.
- **Associate Degree.** A post-secondary academic degree issued by a community college, university, or technical college that can be earned in as little as two years if attending full time. Associate degrees usually consist of 90 college credits that often include general education courses, electives, and courses required toward a chosen major. Types of associate degrees include an Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Technical Arts (ATA), Associate of Arts and Science - Direct Transfer Agreement (AAS-DTA), Associate of Science (AS), Associate of Applied Science (AAS), and Associate of Applied Science - Transfer (AAS-T). The recipient of an associate degree can transfer credits toward a bachelor's degree program.
- **Certified Provider.** To be approved to receive payment under the WCCC program, a certified provider must comply with the certification contained in chapter [43.216](#), and chapters 100-06n 110-300A, and [110-305](#) WAC. Certified providers include: Tribal child care that meet federal requirements of tribal law, child care facilities on military installations, child care facilities operated on public school property by a school district and seasonal day camps that contract with DCYF to provide subsidized care.
- **Bachelor's Degree (BA).** A post-secondary degree issued by a college or university that is usually earned in four years if attending full time. Bachelor's degrees usually consist of approximately 180 college credits with the last two years (junior and senior years) focusing on a specific major. Types of bachelor's degrees include a Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS), and Bachelor of Applied Science - Teaching (BAS-T).
- **Child Care.** Refers to supervision of children outside the child's home for periods of less than 24 hours a day.
- **Child Care Aware of Washington Scholarships.** Administers scholarship funding for early learning professionals pursuing a bachelor's degree in ECE or similar field or a specialized certificate program (i.e., Montessori or University of Washington Coaching program).
- **Child Care Basics (CCB).** A 30-hour curriculum designed to meet the initial basic training requirement for early learning program staff working in licensed or certified programs in Washington State. It serves as a broad introduction for professionals who are pursuing a career in the early care and education field. It covers the state and federal health and safety topics for pre-service requirement in licensed care.

- **Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)**. Federal funding that states and tribes use to provide financial assistance to low-income families to access child care so they can work or attend a job training or



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educational program. Funds are also used to improve child care quality.

- **Community-Based Training.** A training-based equivalent option for early learning providers to meet their licensing education requirement for those requiring an Initial or Short Certificate for their role.
- **Community-Based Trainer.** A state-approved trainer provides training/instruction in specific content areas at specific levels of the core competencies as an individual or is associated with an organization. This can be an independent trainer or on associated with an organization.
- **Conference or Special Event Application.** Allows organizations and trainers to submit an application to DCYF to have experts who are not state-approved trainers conduct training that earns in-service hours (STARS). All conference/special events align with Washington State Core Competencies and include a knowledge assessment and evaluation of training.
- **Continuing Education Proposal.** An application used to request in-service hours for training completed with a non-state approved trainer. Applications are reviewed for alignment with Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals to determine if eligible for in-service hours (STARS).
- **Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals.** A set of Washington State professional standards for educators working with children and youth, developed to correspond with the Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals and national standards. They define what child and youth development professionals need to know and be able to do to provide quality care and expanded learning for children and their families. They serve as the foundation for decisions and practices carried out by professionals in all child and youth settings and align with national standards for child and youth development professionals.
- **Core Competencies for Early Care and Education.** A set of Washington State professional standards for educators working with children, developed to correspond with the Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals and national standards. They define what early learning professionals need to know and be able to do to provide quality care and education for children and their families. They serve as the foundation for decisions and practices carried out by professionals in all early care and education settings and align with national standards for early childhood educators.
- **Department of Children, Youth, and Families.** Also referred to as DCYF or the agency. DCYF is a cabinet-level agency focused on the well-being of children. DCYF is the lead agency for state-funded services that support children and families to build resilience and health, and to improve educational outcomes.
- **DCYF Regions.** Six regions in Washington State used for regional breakdown.
- **DCYF Scholarships.** An educational support program that serves those that work on behalf of children and families. The DCYF scholarship program is a non-traditional scholarship model, which allows funding to be delivered through grant opportunities. The benefit to students is that this model does not require a student to pay back any funds regardless of academic outcomes. DCYF contracts with the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges and Child Care Aware of Washington Scholarships to manage the DCYF scholarships.
- **Dropping a Class.** Dropping a class during the refund/schedule adjustment period means the student no longer wishes to attend the class and wishes to receive a refund. Dropped courses do not appear on the official college transcript, and no grade is issued for dropped courses.
- **Dual Language.** A form of bilingual education in which students are taught literacy and content in two languages. Dual language programs promote native language retention while adding a partner language. The goal is bilingualism, bi-literacy, and biculturalism (Source: Dual Language Education of New Mexico; Center for Applied Linguistics.)
- **Dual Language Learners.** *See also: Multilingual Learners.* Refers to children who are learning two or

more languages at the same time. This term includes children who learn two or more languages from birth (simultaneous), and children who are still mastering their home language when they are introduced to and start learning a second language (sequential).

- **Dual Licensing Pilot.** A program supporting dual licenses between a family home early learning program and foster care.
- **Early Achievers.** A statewide system of high-quality early learning that connects families to early learning programs with the help of an easy-to-understand recognition framework that offers coaching, professional development, and resources for early learning providers to support each child's learning and development.
- **Early Achievers Grant (EAG).** The Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges administers EAG through participating community and technical colleges. EAG provides funding for early learning professional pursuing an ECE Stackable certificate or an associate degree in ECE.
- **Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).** A comprehensive state preschool program that provides free services and support to eligible children and their families.
- **Early Childhood Education (ECE).** ECE is a broad term used to describe the educational and developmental experiences and activities provided for children from birth through age 8. It can also be used to describe the academic program that teachers take to learn more about early childhood development.
- **ECE Coursework.** Course descriptions describe study in the field of ECE and development (birth-aged 8). Terms such as "young child" and "infants and toddlers" indicate ECE work. ECE codes are clearly ECE. Often CFS, CHDV, EDUC, etc., can be ECE.
- **ECE Initial Certificate.** Washington's Initial Certificate in ECE that serves as the point of entry for a career in early learning and covers foundational content for early learning professionals. Participants may earn 12 quarter credits.
- **ECE Short Certificate.** This certificate builds on the Initial Certificate, and offers participants areas of specialization in ECE.
- **ECE State Certificate.** Washington's State Certificate in ECE is the benchmark for Level 2 Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals and prepares for the next step, an associate degree in ECE.
- **Early Learning and Development Guidelines.** A set of guidelines published by DCYF, the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and Thrive Washington for children birth through third grade that outlines what children know and are able to do at different stages of their development.
- **Early Learning Program.** Refers to regularly scheduled care for a group of children birth through 12 years of age for periods of less than 24 hours, licensed by DCYF.
- **Early Learning Provider(s).** Includes all early learning professionals who may be Licensed Family Home (LFH), Licensed Child Care Center, Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN), or program delivery such as ECEAP.
- **Early Learning Regional Coalitions.** A group of early learning professionals, parents, K-12 school leaders, and business and civic leaders who represent a geographic area. [The state is divided into 10 regions.](#) Coalition members assess the need for early learning services in their community, plan actions, and build public support.
- **Early Start Act (ESA).** A June 2015 legislation focused on improving access to high-quality early learning opportunities in Washington as a key path to improving outcomes in young children and promoting strong school readiness rates.
- **Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT).** A program that provides family-centered services to

children birth to age 3 who experience developmental delay or disability.

- **Education Application.** An electronic application available in the MERIT Workforce Registry to request verification of education information and recording of outcome in MERIT. An education application may be submitted for diplomas, degrees, or colleges attended; continuing education training hours (in-service training hours); and educational certificates.
- **Education Application Statuses.** Options throughout the verification process:
  - **Awaiting Documents:** Supporting documentation has not been received.
  - **Under Review:** Documents received (within 90 days of application being submitted).
  - **Approved:** Supporting document match and support listed education credential.
  - **Denied:** Supporting document not received/does not match listed education in application.
  - **Withdrawn:** Education credential not received within 90 days of application being submitted.
- **Education Appeals.** Initiated by the education verification applicant, the appeal form documents official request for secondary review of a processed education application when an error may have occurred in the education verification process.
- **Education Award.** Monetary incentive provided to early learning professionals for their professional achievements.
- **Education Movement.** A term for educational accomplishments that an individual has made after submitting their initial education application.
- **Education Verification.** The process of evaluating an education application in MERIT.
- **Education Verification Manual.** A manual that outlines the process and procedures for education verification.
- **Educational Service Districts (ESD).** A regional education unit in Washington State. Organizationally different from a school district, a single ESD in Washington serves dozens of school districts. ESDs are established to allow school districts to work, plan, and buy equipment collectively. Washington has nine ESDs that oversee 295 school districts across the state.
- **Electronic Attendance System (EAS) Training.** Training delivered to child care providers to orient them to the new electronic attendance system.
- **Enhancing Quality of Early Learning (EQEL).** A 20-hour training series that is completed after Child Care Basics. Training topics include Continuous Quality Improvement, Culturally Responsive Practices, Brain Building, Executive Function, Trauma-Informed Care, Engaging Environments and Interactions, and Positive Behavior Support.
- **Equivalency.** When referring to staff qualifications, equivalency means an individual is allowed to meet the requirements of WAC 110-300 through a DCYF-recognized alternative credential, or demonstration of competency, that indicates similar knowledge as the named credential.
- **Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO).** Time for children and youth to receive care and continue to learn when school is not in session.
- **ELO Environment.** A program or place that provides opportunities for children and youth to continue to learn when school is not in session
- **ELO Professional.** The same as a child and youth development professional for the purposes of this contract.
- **Experience Competency Demonstration.** An experience-based equivalent option for early learning providers needing an initial or short certificate to meet their licensing education requirement. Early learning providers with two years of experience recorded in MERIT before Aug. 1, 2019, and have maintained their training history for the required seven years are eligible for this option.
- **Fair Start for Kids Act.** Legislation passed in 2021 that will increase investments in early learning

services and expand access to programs and services for families.

- **Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN)**. Home-based subsidized care in the caregiver's or child's home provided by caregivers who are relatives, neighbors, friends, babysitters, or nannies that are legally exempt from licensing.
- **Facility/Site**. The location of a DCYF licensed center or family home child care.
- **Financial Aid**. Any grant, scholarship, work-study, or student loan funding used to cover the cost of attending college.
- **Head Start**. A federally-funded program that prepares America's most vulnerable young children to succeed in school and in life beyond school. To achieve this, Head Start programs deliver services to children and families in core areas of early learning, health, and family well-being while engaging parents as partners every step of the way. Head Start encompasses Head Start preschool programs, which primarily serve 3-and 4-year old children, and Early Head Start programs for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. Head Start services are delivered in Washington through 31 agencies and 19 tribes which tailor the program to the local needs of families in their service area.
- **In-Service Hours**. Training hours that meet the need for annual training requirements, delivered by a DCYF state-approved trainer or approved by DCYF to maintain staff standards and qualifications while employed as an early learning provider.
- **International Education**. Education earned outside of the United States.
- **KinderConnect**. A web-based time and attendance portal designed for child care providers to record and submit attendance for subsidized child care programs using a laptop or PC.
- **KinderSign**. A mobile application designed for tablet devices used for tracking children's attendance in early education programs, preschools, and after school programs.
- **KinderSmart**. A mobile application designed for smartphones used for tracking children's attendance in early education programs, preschools, and after school programs.
- **Learning Labs**. Additional learning and technology support provided in a group environment.
- **Learning Management System (LMS)**. A software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting, and delivery of professional learning opportunities.
- **Center Early Learning Program/Licensed Child Care Center**. A licensed program in a facility providing regularly scheduled care for a group of children birth through 12 years of age for periods of less than 24 hours a day, pursuant to RCW 43.216.010 (1)(a).
- **Family Home Early Learning Program/Licensed Family Home**. An early learning program licensed by DCYF where a family home licensee provides child care or education services for 12 or fewer children in the family living quarters where the licensee resides as provided in RCW 43.216.010 (1)(c).
- **MERIT**. The Managed Education and Registry Tool (MERIT) is the Washington State DCYF workforce registry. It includes professional records of individuals, provider background checks, training records, educational information, and qualification data.
- **Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE)**. A national accrediting body for Montessori programs.
- **Multilingual Learners**. An inclusive word to describe learners who are learning two or more languages at the same time. This term includes children who learn two or more languages from birth (simultaneous), and children who are still mastering their home language when they are introduced to and start learning an additional language (sequential).
- **National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES)**. An organization that conducts a course-by-course evaluation of foreign degrees to determine the number of ECE, school-age, or ECE/school-age combined credits they have earned.

- **Organization Trainer Mentor (OTM)**. The organization is a contractor to DCYF and provides an organization trainer mentor (OTM) who assists other staff in completing the trainer approval process. OTMs are committed to following the quality assurance process and expectations and provide mentoring and support to their organization trainer applicants.
- **Outdoor Preschool**. Licensed, nature-based child care for preschool and school-age children.
- **Pre-Service Training**. Training that is completed before someone is employed or soon after becoming employed. Pre-service is grounded in health and safety topics and does not earn in-service hours (STARS hours).
- **Provider**. Early learning staff providing care in the early learning program. Designees include center directors, assistant directors, program supervisors, family home licensees, lead teachers, assistant teachers, aides, and volunteers.
- **Professional Development Plan (PDP)**. A plan to identify the goals, strategies, and outcomes of learning and training to meet the licensing or performance standards education requirement for a provider's role within a specific timeframe.
- **Professional Record**. The section of the MERIT workforce registry covering information about an individual. It includes personal contact information, as well as pre-service, training, and education completion.
- **Provider ID Number**. The number associated with the child care program license issued by DCYF as part of the licensing process.
- **Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRID)**. An organized way to assess, improve, and communicate the quality of learning programs.
- **Relationship-Based Professional Development (RBPD)**. An approach that uses professional relationships as a primary method to support professional growth and development for adult learners. RBPD implements a reflective cycle of inquiry that uses an evidence-based adult-learning process of goal setting, observation, assessment, action planning, reflection, and feedback.
- **RBPD Standards**. These competencies focus on professional relationships as the primary focus in professional development and growth. It describes the knowledge and skills that professionals must have to facilitate adult professional development within a reflective framework.
- **Revised Code of Washington (RCW)**. A compilation of all permanent laws now in force.
- **School-Age Basics**. A 30-hour curriculum designed to meet the initial basic training requirement for school-age program staff working in a licensed or certified school-age child care program in Washington State.
- **School-Age Coursework**. Course content in the educational field with learners aged 9-21. Terms such as "adolescent" and "middle childhood" and "middle school" indicate school-age work.
- **School Age Provider**. Refers to a licensee or designee who works in a school-age program during hours when children are or may be present. Designees include program directors, site directors, lead teachers, assistant teachers, aides, and volunteers.
- **Services Employees International Union 925 (SEIU)**. Union representing the interests of Licensed Family Child Care and License Exempt Providers.
- **SEIU 925 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)**. The agreement negotiated and entered into between the state and SEIU Local 925. This CBA represents licensed Family Child Care Providers and License Exempt Providers.
- **Seasonal Child Care**. The seasonal child care program pays child care subsidies to eligible seasonally employed agricultural families. The program's purpose is to provide safe, licensed child care while parents work in agricultural settings.
- **State Training and Registry System Hours**. Former name for annual training requirements, now known

as in-service hours. See the definition for in-service hours.

- **State-Approved Trainer.** A trainer approved to offer in-service hours for DCYF. This is an assigned role in DCYF's workforce registry for tracking and monitoring statewide training delivery. State-Approved Trainers may also have specific training privileges assigned to them by DCYF to deliver certain pre-service or in-service training requirements or other DCYF developed training.
- **State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC).** A Governor-appointed board that provides leadership and support for community and technical colleges in Washington State.
- **STEM Training.** Training that encompasses a vast array of subjects that fall into Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.
- **Substitute Pool Administrator.** The contracted entity that administers the state's substitute pool.
- **Subsidy.** Child care programs authorized to serve families that are eligible to receive state financial assistance to pay for child care costs. These programs receive financial reimbursements for eligible children enrolled in care.
- **Subsidy Billing Training.** Instruction provided to prepare Licensed Family Child Care and FFN (License Exempt) providers to claim the correct amount of child care subsidy from the state.
- **Substitute Pool Software.** The software that matches eligible facilities with qualified substitutes.
- **Trainer Advisory Board (TAB).** Provides input and recommendations to DCYF regarding the state approval process and ongoing quality assurance for trainers and training.
- **Trainer Assurances.** A set of expectations state-approved trainers agree and adhere to as part of being a state-approved trainer.
- **Trainer Standards.** The trainer standards provide detail with measurable and observable skills necessary for trainers to provide quality professional learning.
- **Trainer Observer.** DCYF staff or contracted professionals who provide observations and individualized feedback to trainers through the observation and evaluation process used for quality assurance of state-approved trainers.
- **Trainer Observation Rubric.** The tool used to evaluate the quality of in-person, online, and self-paced/correspondence training as part of the trainer application and quality assurance processes.
- **Trainer Sanctions.** Issued to a state-approved trainer if a state-approved trainer does not meet the Trainer Standards of Practice and Professionalism or engages in fraudulent/illegal activity.
- **Trainer Support Awards.** Financial support available for state-approved trainers to reimburse for their professional development and training materials.
- **Training Organization.** Listed in MERIT as an organization who employs or contracts with state-approved trainers to provide professional learning opportunities for Washington's early learning workforce. Trainers can associate with their organization when recording training in MERIT as a way to track all training provided by that organization delivered by multiple trainers.
- **Training Reimbursement.** Reimbursement for trainings provided to qualifying individuals working in a licensed facility.
- **Translation.** Language translation of a diploma or transcript for evaluation purposes. Translation does not include evaluation of the degree to determine U.S. equivalency.
- **User.** An individual who participates in the early learning workforce, and utilizes the MERIT workforce registry.
- **Washington Administrative Code (WAC).** Regulations that are arranged by subject or agency.
- **Workforce Registry.** A system of record to record and access individual information specific to workforce data. Washington's workforce registry is MERIT.
- **Working Connections Child Care (WCCC).** Child care subsidy benefits for families with low incomes that help pay for child care while parents work or meet Work First participation requirements.