

Core Knowledge and Competencies: Considerations

National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives (PDW Center)
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State/Territory integrated professional development systems (PDS) consist of interrelated efforts, services, and supports that address the continuum of workforce needs with a common goal of building and sustaining an effective workforce. A comprehensive, integrated PDS includes at a minimum *all* of the primary early care and education (ECE) and school-age (SA) sectors, settings, and roles.

Integrated PDS *may* also target and serve professionals in related systems or pieces of related systems (defined on page 3 of this guide). Exactly which sectors and systems comprise a State's/Territory's vision for an integrated PDS depends on its context including its political and fiscal situation, where and how the PD systems fits in its larger early learning and early childhood systems, and its specific PD goals and priorities. A State's/Territory's context can dictate the best approach(es) for pursuing and being successful with integration efforts.

States and Territories have made significant investments in PDS to sustain a professionally prepared workforce of teachers, administrators, and increasingly, adult educators such as consultants, technical assistance providers, trainers, and higher education faculty. Many of these professionals have traditionally been served by multiple systems of preparation and ongoing support based on their role, setting, and funding source. Education, training, technical assistance, and professional progression are enhanced by a single, integrated system that provides opportunities for growth from entry through advanced levels.

Core Knowledge and Competencies

Core knowledge and competencies (CKCs) refers to the expectations for what the workforce should know (content) and be able to do (skills) in their role working with and/or on behalf of children and their families. These CKCs provide a foundation for professional development design including instructional practices and other quality improvement efforts. (*CCDF Plan Preprint FY 2012-2013*, Part 3.4.1)

Comprehensive PDS are built on the foundation of professional standards that delineate CKCs for the workforce. All ECE and SA professionals need the central knowledge and skills described in CKCs, at a minimum, to adequately perform their roles. Various roles, settings, and sectors may require additional *specializations* of knowledge and skills for professionals to be most effective.

Considerations for Developing or Revising CKCs

The following considerations are designed as a planning guide for State/Territory teams as they begin the work to develop or revise and then implement CKCs. The considerations are built on a readiness for change process framework. The four suggested steps in the process may take more than one work session to complete. As a first step in using these considerations, determine if any of these steps have already been started or completed. The PDW Center can provide additional TA related to the process for using these consideration questions and forming effective implementation teams. The steps are:

1. Develop or refine the goal and outcomes;
2. Discuss the fit and feasibility of the CKCs development or revision;
3. Discuss other key considerations related to readiness for change; and
4. Create an implementation plan.

Step 1: Goal/Outcome Development

The first step is to help define the goal and outcomes as concretely as possible.

- **What do we want to achieve by developing or revising CKCs and how will we measure success?**
- **How can this effort be used to unify the field?**

Step 2: Fit and Feasibility

The second step is to discuss the fit and feasibility of CKCs development or revision. The fit and feasibility discussion includes **initial** consideration of:

- **How will the CKCs fit in the professional development system?**
 - ◆ Foundational knowledge
 - ◆ Framing for community based training, higher education courses, approval, tracking, etc.
 - ◆ Relationship to career pathway and credentials
 - ◆ Specializations
 - ◆ Articulation links (including with national standards and State/Territory certifications)
- **How will CKCs be used across settings and sectors, and fit with other related systems and other quality improvement efforts?**
 - ◆ Settings: Settings are where services are provided, including direct and non-direct service programs, organizations, agencies, etc. Settings and their administration often cross multiple EC and SA sectors, and increasingly they cross related systems. They also can and often do have a combination of characteristics listed below.
 - Public and private
 - Profit and non-profit
 - Faith-based
 - Community-based
 - School-based
 - Home-based
 - Employer sponsored
 - Licensing requirements
 - ◆ Sectors: The ECE and SA system is composed of sectors. Sectors are delineated by their discrete funding streams, regulations, and requirements. Because early intervention and special education services cross and serve multiple sectors, they are sometimes described as part of each of these sectors and sometimes also described as separate systems. However, for the purposes of discussing and framing intentional PDS integration, they are defined in this guide as ECE and SA primary sectors to underscore their importance as well as their discrete professional preparation and development history, delivery, and requirements. The ECE and SA primary sectors include:
 - Child care
 - Head Start/Early Head Start
 - Public preschool/primary education
 - Early intervention/Special education

- ◆ Related Systems: Systems that are related to and overlap with the ECE and SA system include family support which may provide parenting education, home visiting, economic supports, and other services; and health and mental health which may provide preventative care, screenings, and supports to access health providers, as well as instructional support.
- ◆ Quality Improvement Efforts: PDS are an integral part of other quality improvement efforts in States and Territories. These efforts may include:
 - Licensing
 - Quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS)
 - State/Territory system building initiatives/plans (CCDF, State Early Childhood Advisory Council, Head Start, State Early Childhood Comprehensive System Grants, Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, etc.)
- **How will it “fit” with community values, including the values of diverse cultural groups?**
- **What are the unique needs of the infant/toddler and school-age community for CKCs?**
 - ◆ Will these unique elements be embedded in a universal document, or will there be a set of specialized knowledge and competencies for the infant toddler or school-age workforce?

Step 3: Readiness to Change

If the initial assessment of fit and feasibility of the proposed CKCs initiative seems promising, there are additional key considerations to discuss in-depth in order to create readiness to change:

- **Identification and validation of need;**
- **Consideration of required changes;**
- **Planning for change;**
- **Communication plan;**
- **Implementation plan; and**
- **Data collection and reporting plan.**

Identification and Validation of Need

- **Is there consensus that CKCs need to be developed or revised?**
- **Has there been substantial change in the research since the last version was completed?**
- **Are there adjustments to be made in order to include all or targeted sectors?**
- **Is there agreement on who the CKCs are for? ALL, but is there a target and any planned specializations?**
 - ◆ Roles
 - ◆ Age ranges
 - ◆ Settings
 - ◆ Sectors
 - ◆ Related systems
 - ◆ Levels of proficiency and mastery

Consideration of Required Changes

- Are there overarching issues to be addressed, such as dispositions or cultural diversity?
- Are there specific populations that need to be addressed such as infant/toddler, school-age, etc.?
- Are there specific content areas that need to be addressed, e.g., supporting healthy weight, management skills?
- Do the CKCs specifically address the importance of early experiences and their impact on later development?
- Do the CKCs address helping families engage with their children?
- Do the CKCs address brain development and the importance of relationships?
- Do the CKCs address relationships as the context for learning, especially in the first three years, as well as for older children?
- How will CKCs be used and what changes will need to be made?
 - ◆ By systems
 - ◆ By those providing PD, including faculty
 - ◆ By ECE and SA direct service staff
 - ◆ By ECE and SA staff working on behalf of young children

Planning for Change

- **Where is the authority to create and implement the CKCs located?**
 - ◆ What cross-agency agreements will need to be in place?
 - ◆ How will the work be done?
 - ◆ Who will manage the work?
 - ◆ What is the time frame?
 - ◆ What is currently in place to support the work?
 - ◆ What TA is available?
- **How can alignment be ensured with:**
 - ◆ Other parts of the PD system? (credentials, career pathways, access, capacity, workforce data)?
 - ◆ Other quality improvement efforts and standards (e.g., licensing, national standards, QRIS, early learning guidelines, etc.?)
 - ◆ With higher education courses and programs?
- **What funding is required to complete this work?**
 - ◆ What are sources of funding?
- **Who should be involved in the development?**
 - ◆ What sectors?
 - ◆ What are the barriers to involving multiple sectors and can the challenges be overcome?
 - ◆ What roles and specialized areas – adult educators, policymakers, practitioners, researchers, IT, SA, special needs/early intervention, schools, etc.?
 - ◆ Authors of already existing professional standards?
- **How will the CKCs be developed?**
 - ◆ By writing teams or by a single editor/overall writer?
 - ◆ If teams are used, how will they be formed?
 - ◆ Will there be writing and research guides and ground rules?

- ◆ What is the timeframe for development/revisions?
- ◆ Will/how will national standards/criteria be used?
- **What will be included?**
 - ◆ Purpose
 - ◆ Rationales
 - ◆ Research
 - ◆ Usage guide
 - ◆ Individual professional development planning/plans (IPDPs)
 - ◆ System mapping
 - ◆ Levels
 - ◆ Credentials

Communication Plan

- **Who needs to know about the CKCs initiative, what do they need to know and how will communication be conducted?**
 - ◆ Various professionals across settings, sectors, and systems
 - ◆ Policymakers
 - ◆ Partners
 - ◆ Professionals working directly with young children and their families
 - ◆ Program directors/administrators
 - ◆ Training and TA providers
 - ◆ Higher education faculty and administrators
- **What information products are needed for which audiences?**
- **How will feedback be solicited and collected from all potential users on drafts of the document?**

Implementation Plan

- **How will the CKCs be distributed?**
- **What training and supports are needed?**
 - ◆ How will training on the CKCs *and* how to implement them be included?
- **What infrastructure is needed?**
- **What leadership is needed?**
- **How will the CKCs be integrated into the training approval process?**
- **How will CKCs be integrated into course development?**
- **What processes are available or needed to assess competency acquisition?**
 - ◆ What resources are available to support assessment?
- **How will the link between the CKCs and early learning guidelines be emphasized?**
- **Do credentials or career lattice levels need to be revised based on changes to CKCs?**
- **What career advising resources are available? Do they need to be revised?**

Data Collection and Reporting Plan

- **How will we define and measure the success/impact of the CKCs? How will we measure and monitor outcomes?**
 - ◆ What data is needed?
 - Staff trained on core knowledge?
 - Staff assessed on competencies?
 - Training and courses aligned with CKCs?
 - CKCs use?
 - CKCs integration into the PDS?
 - Other?
 - ◆ Who will the data include and how will it be used?
 - Data on the workforce in all settings and sectors?
 - Data on the workforce in related systems?
 - What reports are needed for whom and when?
 - Will data be shared with licensing?
 - Will data be shared with the QRIS?
 - ◆ What data system infrastructure exists already and what infrastructure is needed?
 - What data is available from the workforce registry or other tracking system?
- **When do we need to review and adjust our plans?**

Governance, Political, Financial and Sustainability Considerations

- **What organization(s) are best positioned to implement, grow and sustain the use of CKCs?**
- **How can periodic review/revision of the CKCs and their use be insured?**
- **How can law, regulations, policy and guidance be used to support the CKCs as the foundation of an integrated EC and SA PD systems?**
 - ◆ Incorporate into next revision of licensing law and/or regulations as a basis for PD requirements and content distribution for preservice qualifications and/or ongoing PD?
 - ◆ Develop policies that require the use of CKCs as a basis for approved training, curriculum, and/or credentials?
 - ◆ Provide guidance on the assessment and approval of distance learning courses?
 - ◆ Provide guidance on the use of the CKCs as the foundation for IPDPs and career advisement?
 - ◆ Other ways?

Step 4: Create an Implementation Plan

An implementation plan should be developed after the State/Territory team has worked through the considerations outlined in Steps 2 and 3. The implementation plan will assign roles and responsibilities for implementation and outline a timeline for the process. To the extent possible, the implementation plan should build on the information gathered to date by developing action steps that will guide implementation. The implementation plan should also outline how feedback and data will be used to ensure that implementation is proceeding as planned. Key elements of monitoring an implementation plan and questions to guide this continuous improvement process are described below.

Checking In

Purpose: Develop a process for checking in on implementation activities to date.

- How will the State/Territory collect information about the progress of implementation activities to date?
- How will the State/Territory receive feedback from key stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of the CKCs, as well as from the recipients of the efforts?
- What process will be used to gather information from evaluation efforts, data systems, and regular reporting from key implementers into inform adjustments needed?

Evaluating

Purpose: Develop a process to reflect upon current implementation activities to determine changes needed to meet implementation goals.

- Who will be responsible for reflecting upon the information gathered through the established check-in processes? Which stakeholders need to be involved?
- How often should the feedback gathered through monitoring processes be considered?
- What process will the State/Territory use to evaluate feedback from multiple monitoring activities to make decisions about adjustments to the implementation plan?

Making Adjustments

Purpose: Develop a process for adjusting current implementation activities based upon successes and challenges identified in the current implementation plan.

- What threshold will the State/Territory use to determine that the evidence collected points to a need to adjust or modify implementation activities?
- How will the State/Territory implement modifications to the CKCs implementation plans or activities?
- What parts of the implementation process will need to be revisited to make adjustments? For example, will the adjustment require a new communication plan, or an invitation to new stakeholders?
- What process will the State/Territory use to ensure that modifications have led to a stronger implementation plan?