

# Workforce Designs



## A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems

**Goal** State policies should create an integrated system of professional development uniting the early childhood sectors—child care; Head Start; prekindergarten; public schools; early intervention and special education services.

Integrated policies intentionally promote the building and support of an efficient cross-sector system that decreases duplication of efforts and increases accountability and sustainability. An integrated system helps develop and retain a competent and stable early childhood workforce—a skilled cadre of effective, diverse, and adequately compensated professionals.

### Why?

Qualified and well-compensated professionals are essential to ensuring high-quality early childhood education programs. State policies and financing of the professional development system have a significant impact on the recruitment, quality, and retention of early childhood professionals.

### Why Now?

As the number of children in child care, state-funded preschool, Early Head Start, and Head Start grow, and as states expand their interest in high-quality learning, it is important that state policy makers place attention on high-quality early childhood professionals in all settings. Making sure that there are well-considered and financed systems of professional development for these professionals is critical to ensuring that children have high-quality early development and learning experiences.

The full report of *Workforce Designs* and related resources, including a state policy database, are available online at

[www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi).

### How?

*Workforce Designs* provides a roadmap for every state, building on efforts to date. Policy makers should use this blueprint to evaluate gaps and improvements in state policies in order to ensure that policies are coherent and appropriately financed.

### Essential Policy Areas to Address

#### 1. Professional Standards: the content of professional preparation and ongoing development.

State policies should specify qualifications and ongoing development required for all early care and education professionals—from teacher assistants to trainers and higher education faculty, family child care providers, licensors, resource and referral staff, and program, school, district, and agency administrators. These specifications should address levels and content of education as well as ongoing development.

#### 2. Career Pathways: routes of continuous progress for early childhood professionals, so they can plan the achievement of increased qualifications, understand the professional possibilities, and be appropriately compensated.

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Policies should institutionalize pathways in all sectors and for all roles—both direct service (those individuals working with young children and their families) and nondirect service (those working on behalf of children and families in training, resource, and other administrative roles).

### **3. Articulation: the transfer of professional development credentials, courses, credits, degrees, and student performance-based competencies from one program or institution to another, ideally without a loss of credits.**

States should require colleges and universities to make articulation agreements that assist early childhood professionals in moving seamlessly through and across undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Grants or specific directions for resource allocations should be attached to such policy requirements; colleges and universities will need fiscal support to change or augment long-standing, institutionalized processes.

### **4. Advisory Structure: the coordination mechanism for an integrated early childhood professional development system, which should be free standing and have some authority or direct link to authority in the state's governance structure.**

State policy should require the creation of an advisory structure to examine needs and provide policy recommendations to the entity or combined entities funding the professional development system. Its composition should include representatives from the diverse settings, auspices, and roles of the early childhood field and professional development system supports.

### **5. Data: to gauge impacts and systems change, as well as to inform planning, evaluation, quality assurance, and accountability.**

State policies should require the collection of specific data and also mandate cross-sector data collection, sharing, and alignment, and nonduplication of efforts. Policies also should require comprehensive workforce studies conducted at regular intervals and ongoing collection and reporting of professional development utilization and improvement indicators. Additionally, policies should include specific requirements for disaggregating data

by type of setting, demographics, and primary financing source(s).

### **6. Financing: the funding that all professional development systems need in order to operate.**

State policies should support the financing of integrated professional development systems in the specific areas of needs-based support for early childhood professionals to obtain education and ongoing development; support for programs/workplaces that facilitate professional development; explicit rewards and compensation parity for attainment of additional education and development; and financing of the professional development system infrastructure.

## **Principles to guide workforce policies**

Developing policies for integrated early childhood professional development systems is complex and interrelated. Every time a policy is examined—for development, revision, or any other purpose—there should be reflection on whether the principles highlighted in the questions below are being addressed. If not, then the examination should include an assessment of why they are not and how policies can be created or revised to incorporate them.

- Does this policy increase **integration** among the sectors?
- Does it include **quality assurances**?
- Does it support **diversity, inclusion, and access**?
- Does it increase **compensation parity**?

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