New Hampshire SHARED PROFESSIONAL
EARLY CHILDHOOD CORE COMPETENCIES

The Shared Professional Early Childhood Core Competencies (SPECCC) were developed and endorsed by the Workforce and Professional Development Committee of Spark NH, the Governor appointed Early Childhood Advisory Council. The document has been reviewed by multiple professional organizations and individuals throughout the state of NH working in Early Childhood fields or working to impact children and families.

SPECCC is intended to be used as a resource for all professionals who work with and on behalf of expectant families, children from birth through grade 3, and their families, with a particular focus on the fields of family support, health and early learning. These competencies apply to the work professionals engage in with respect for each family's race, religion, language, ethnicity, culture, literacy, socioeconomic status, family configuration, and any other aspect of the family dynamic.

SPECCC can be used by professionals to assess their level of knowledge and skill; by directors and program administrators to assess staff, facilitate individual professional development planning and inform job descriptions; by those who plan trainings to promote specific skill development; by higher education professionals to design course content and inform articulation agreements; by public and private funders and policy makers to create policies that enhance professional development opportunities; and by others interested in professional development efforts to create the framework for a career development system that allows professionals to achieve recognition in the field, provides access to competency-based training/education, and promotes compensation commensurate with their educational achievement.

It is understood that these competencies are not all-inclusive and do not represent the depth and scope of the technical or clinical skills required of some professions. It is understood that different degrees of competency may be required or expected of a professional whose role or level of experience or expertise would indicate such need. Competencies are organized in the following categories:

- **Child Development**
- **Screening and Assessment**
- **Family Centered Practice**
- **Prevention Practices and Addressing Challenges**
- **Program Development/Mission**
- **Professional Identity and Development**

1.   Child Development

All Early Childhood (EC) professionals understand appropriate developmental expectations for young children and use that knowledge to effectively serve the children with whom they work and their families.

1.1   Knowledge of Child Development

1.1.a.   Demonstrates an understanding of the holistic nature of early development including the role and importance of family culture.

1.1.b.   Articulates an understanding that children's development is continuous and articulates the significant developmental milestones in various domains.

1.1.c.   Describes principles of growth and development and the basic findings from brain development research.

1.1.d.   Describes an understanding of the broad range of typical child development.

1.2.   Influences on Child Development

1.2.a.   Describes how all children learn and develop through experience and active participation.

1.2.b.   Describes the crucial roles of sensory processing, exploration and play in child development.

1.2.c.   Articulates an understanding of the impact of relationships and environment on child development.

1.2.d.   Articulates an understanding that each child's unique familial, cultural, and societal context influences child development.

1.2.e.   Demonstrates an understanding of common developmental, health and mental health concerns that occur in childhood.

1.3.   Developmentally-Appropriate Practice

1.3.a.   Bases responses to each child's developmental differences on evidence-based, best practices.

1.3.b.   Describes how behavior is a form of communication.

1.3.c.   Demonstrates the developmentally appropriate use of verbal and non-verbal communication with young children.

1.3.d.   Provides opportunities for parents to increase their knowledge of child development.

1.4 Fostering Development in Children

1.4.a.   Describes how the creative process, aesthetic environment, and nature are important to the development of all children.

1.4.b.   Articulates an understanding of the importance of encouraging children to develop problem solving and conflict resolution skills.

1.4.c.   Articulates an understanding of the use of positive reinforcement and natural and logical consequences.

1.4.d.   Articulates how routines are important for growth and development and childhood well-being.

1.4.e.   Compares a variety of types of play and describes how each contributes to the growth and development of children.

2.   Screening and Assessment

All EC professionals individualize their work to meet children's and families' needs. Determining those needs takes evaluation informed by multiple sources, which may include: the parent(s) and other caregivers, natural supports, providers from other disciplines, and validated assessment tools.

2.1 Screening/Determination of Risk Factors/Need for Referral

2.1.a.   Identifies appropriate expectations for child development and recognizes atypical development.

2.1.b.   Gathers appropriate child, family and medical history to inform the screening process.

2.1.c.   Utilizes observation and documentation throughout the screening process.

2.1.d.   Utilizes appropriate developmental screening tools.

2.2 Assessment Process

2.2.a.   Assures assessment process is inclusive and respectful of family values, culture, and language.

2.2.b.   Engages the family as full partners in the assessment process.

2.2.c.   Communicates assessment results in a manner easily understood and appropriate to the family.

2.2.d.   Demonstrates an understanding that early childhood assessment is an ongoing process which happens in the context of a child's relationships and environments.

2.2.e.   Demonstrates an understanding of both formal and informal assessment methods.

2.2.f.   Analyzes the bias inherent in, and the impact of one's own role in assessment process.

2.2.g.   Utilizes conceptual frameworks to guide processes of assessment, intervention and evaluation.

2.2.h.   Participates in and evaluates developmentally appropriate assessments in partnership with families and other professionals.

2.2.i.   Demonstrates ability to observe and accurately document as part of formal/informal assessment.

2.2.j.   Demonstrates ability to use assessment results to inform practice.

3.   Family Centered Practice

EC professionals partner with families to best meet children's needs and promote family wellbeing.

3.1.   Families as experts of their own experience.

3.1.a.   Effectively engages families as equally respected partners in determining strengths and needs, setting goals, developing implementation plans, and monitoring progress.

3.1.b.   Demonstrates empathy and a non-judgmental approach in work with families.

3.1.c.   Utilizes strategies designed to meet individualized family needs, priorities and concerns promoting family-directed services.

3.1.d.   Demonstrates respect for families' beliefs, practices, and cultures.

3.1.e.   Provides families with complete information to assist their decision-making.

3.1.f.   Assists families to understand their rights and responsibilities.

3.1.g.   Empowers families by encouraging participation in leadership opportunities.

3.2.   Strengths-Based Practice

3.2.a.   Demonstrates family-centered philosophy in practice.

3.2.b.   Demonstrates an understanding of the impact of a family's culture, environment, and community on a child.

3.2.c.   Recognizes and promotes wellness and resiliency within families.

3.2.d.   Implements strategies that promote family and community protective factors.

3.2.e.   Interacts with all children and families in respectful, responsive ways that build trust and emotional security.

3.3   Support to Families

3.3.a.   Promotes families' ability to identify and communicate concerns, priorities, resources, and interests in order to self-advocate.

3.3.b.   Works to increase families' knowledge of their children's development.

3.3.c.   Demonstrates an understanding of family development and the process of change.

3.3.d.   Supports families in identifying and accessing natural and community-based supports, resources and services.

3.3.e.   Implements prevention, assessment and intervention strategies that are family-driven, strength-based and result in positive outcomes.

3.3.f.   Supports parent-child relationship.

3.3.g.   Utilizes natural learning opportunities to enhance parenting effectiveness.

3.3.h.   Models positive interaction with children and families.

4.   Prevention Practices and Addressing Challenges

EC professionals recognize children's and families' strengths. Many challenges can be addressed best by anticipating them and providing the supports necessary to adapt to a child's or family's individualized needs.

4.1   Supporting Children and Families

4.1.a.   Describes the individual needs children and families have that require individualized responses.

4.1.b.   Employs practices that build on child and family resiliency.

4.1.c.   Develops responsive interventions with family input to address needs of each child.

4.1.d. Evaluates the impact of family wellbeing on a child.

4.1.e. Identifies one's own role in promoting family wellbeing.

4.1.f.   Respectfully supports families through common transitions and challenging times.

4.1.g. Articulates an understanding of the impact of trauma on the child, family and relationships.

4.1.h. Demonstrates a trauma informed approach.

4.1.i.   Seeks out information and consultation when serving a child with a particular identified challenge.

4.1.j.   Provides interventions informed by understanding of family systems, child development and social factors.

4.1.k.   Supports families in addressing issues and learning new strategies.

4.1.l.   Facilitates positive closure of relationships during termination/transition phase of work with children and families.

5.   Programs/Systems/Resources

EC professionals should have a working knowledge of the other entities with which children and family interact. EC Professionals have rights, duties and responsibilities, regarding the program that employs them, the families they serve, and the regulating bodies that pertain to their work.

5.1.   Program Development/Mission

5.1.a.   Translates program mission statement into practice.

5.1.b.   Articulates understanding of relationships between program quality and program mission and values.

5.1.c.   Articulates an understanding of the purposes and use of data, systematic review and formal assessments to improve practice with children and families.

5.2.   Service Delivery

5.2.a.   Implements program policy and evidence informed practices at individual, family and community level.

5.2.b.   Demonstrates the ability to design and implement measurable goals.

5.3.   Resources

5.3.a.   Identifies agencies and entities that govern, serve and/or advocate for children and families at state and local level.

5.3.b.   Articulates understanding of the vital roles community and natural supports play in the life of children and families.

5.3.c.   Collaborates with schools, colleagues, families, other professionals and community to meet the needs of children and families.

5.3.d.   Articulates understanding of the eligibility referral processes and makes referrals as appropriate within program and/or to other community resources for families and children.

5.3.e.   Identifies ways programs can provide social connections for families.

5.4.   Policies/Regulations/Laws

5.4.a.   Complies with local, state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to confidentiality, education, health and safety of young children and their families.

5.4.b.   Complies with program's policies and procedures.

5.4.c.   Identifies the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect, follows program policy and state mandatory reporting requirements for reporting concerns about suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

5.4.d.   Describes the laws that protect the rights of children with special needs.

5.4.e.   Articulates the process by which families may express and seek resolution to grievances.

6.   Professional Identity and Development

EC Professionals take responsibility for their own growth and learning, seeking formal and informal opportunities to gain knowledge. EC professionals recognize that self-awareness, professional demeanor, and commitment to growth are signs of developing professionalism.

6.1.   Professional Development

6.1.a.   Identifies own learning needs and seeks supervision/mentoring/consultation.

6.1.b.   Develops a plan for professional development based on identified learning needs and seeks appropriate activities and guidance to improve practice.

6.1.c.   Remains up-to-date with current research, best practice and professional standards.

6.1.d.   Demonstrates and applies systems thinking to work with children and families.

6.2. Self-Awareness

6.2.   Engages in activities which nurture one's own well-being.

6.2.b.   Demonstrates an awareness of own behavior, emotions, life experiences, communication style, values, and bias and how they affect work with children and families and other professionals.

6.2.c.   Practices personal reflection and uses supervisor's/mentor's recommendations to improve practice.

6.2.d.   Effectively communicates and adheres to ethical standards.

6.3   Professional Conduct

6.3.a.   Demonstrates effective and respectful, oral, written, and non-verbal communication using techniques appropriate to the audience and environment.

6.3.b.   Demonstrates knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of varied participants and actively participates on a child and family team.

6.3.c.   Articulates benefits of evidence-informed practice.

6.3.d.   Models ethical conduct in interactions with children and families and other professionals.

6.3e.   Practices confidentiality and demonstrates respect for the privacy of others.

6.3.f.   Articulates the importance of informed consent, family rights, and complaint procedures.

6.3.g.   Exhibits a professional appearance and demonstrates good work habits.

6.3.h.   Maintains professional boundaries.

6.3.i.   Demonstrates acceptance, tolerance and an anti-bias perspective with sensitivity and respect for cultural differences.

6.3.j.   Participates constructively in the change process.

6.3.k.   Develops collaborative relationships with families and service providers including those with different philosophies and styles.

6.3.l.   Demonstrates positive conflict management techniques with individuals and within groups.

April 2016