



# Career Progression: A New Emphasis in Child Care Quality

BY ALISON LUTTON

*Background: the CCDF, CCDBG, professional development, and child care quality*

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is a block grant established in 1990 that provides federal funding to help states, territories, and tribes offer child care to low-income families that are working or are participating in education or training. The Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) *Act* authorizes the *fund* (CCDF) and sets related requirements for how states can spend the money. The CCDBG *Act* was updated or “reauthorized” in 2014 for the first time in 20 years. New Regulations, federal rules, and guidance that will be used to interpret the law were released in 2016.

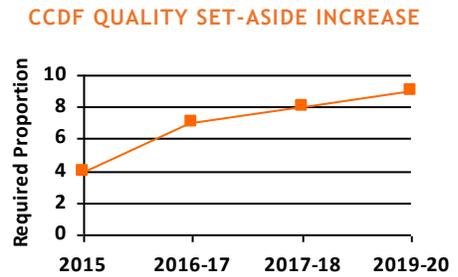
A central focus of the CCDBG update was to strengthen the quality of child care, using what we now know about its role in early education for young children. Philadelphia, like many cities and states, is currently engaged in efforts to expand access to high-quality early learning programs for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Community programs providing child care for families that receive CCDBG subsidies are an important part of Philadelphia’s early learning landscape. The 2014 CCDBG bill and accompanying rules require that states raise the quality of child care programs in four ways:

- 1) Increased health and safety requirements for licensing, training, and background checks.
- 2) New requirements for providing information to parents about programs.
- 3) Adjusted subsidy eligibility requirements to maintain more stable child care placements.
- 4) Increased proportion of the federal grant that states must spend on improving quality in child care programs, called the “quality set-aside,” including new requirements for professional development.

## *Requirements to increase state spending on quality and professional development*

Professional development (PD) for early childhood teachers received a lot of attention in this reauthorization. Professional development is defined here as including college courses and degrees, as well

as coaching or other forms of technical assistance. The proportion of total CCDF money that Pennsylvania and other states must spend on the quality set-aside rises from 4% in 2015 to 7% in 2016-17, 8% in 2017-18, and 9% in 2019-20. At least 3% must be allocated to improving the quality of infant toddler child care, a new requirement.



For Pennsylvania, as with many states, the new health and safety requirements for licensing, training, and background checks alone are a challenge and consume much of the federal quality set-aside in 2016 and 2017, but these are minimum requirements for the percentage of CCDF dollars that can be spent on quality. States may need to spend a higher percentage of their CCDF dollars on quality or may contribute additional funds from their state budgets and other sources.

The CCDBG encourages spending on specific quality improvement activities: professional development, incentives and compensation improvements linked to increased educational credentials, national accreditation for early learning programs, early learning standards or guidelines, QRIS, Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R), infant toddler initiatives, compliance with state regulations, evaluating child care program quality and effectiveness, and health and safety standards. States must choose at least one of these, however may choose more, and may identify additional activities to improve child care quality.

Each state submitted a three-year plan for federal review and approval. Plans for improving quality through professional development are in Section 6. Subsequent years will require reporting on a needs assessment, strategic improvement plan, and how this will guide policy decisions. The Pennsylvania 2016-2018 plan is publicly available here: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/state-plans>

### *Requirements for a professional development framework that supports career progression*

CCDBG Section 45 CFR 98.44 Training and Professional Development states that the professional development plan must include a “*framework* for training, professional development, and postsecondary education for caregivers, teachers, and directors, including those working in school-age care.” Three new emphases are important to highlight.

- 1) **Progression into and completion of higher education** degree programs. Regulation 98.44(a)(5) states that this PD framework “includes professional development conducted on an ongoing basis, providing a progression of professional development (which may include encouraging the pursuit of postsecondary education).”
- 2) **Alignment of state training and education** requirements and opportunities. Regulation 98.44(a)(2) states that the PD framework “May engage training and professional development providers, including higher education, in aligning training and education opportunities with the State’s framework.”

3) ***Linking professional development to compensation.***

Regulation 98.44(a)(7) says the state PD framework “Improves the quality, diversity, stability, and retention (including financial incentives and compensation improvements) of caregivers, teachers, and directors.”

Similarly, the regulations describe how state PD plans should be developed and what should be included in the state’s PD framework. 98.44(a)(3) requires that states work with their state Early Childhood Advisory Council (the current federal Head Start Act defines and requires states to establish this Council) to define a coherent state PD framework. The state plan requires the state professional development framework to include these components:

- 1) Professional standards and competencies,
- 2) Career pathways,
- 3) Advisory structures,
- 4) Articulation agreements,
- 5) Workforce information, and
- 6) Financing.

These six CCDF PD framework components are closely aligned with the six components of the 2008 NAEYC “blueprint” for designing state policies to support more integrated state PD systems and the 2016 NAEYC [Build It Better](#) tool to assess state policy indicators of progress toward integrated and aligned birth through 8 Early Child Professional Development systems. The National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, one of a network of federal Centers that provide technical assistance to help state CCDF administrators meet CCDBG requirements, suggests aligning state competencies with national standards of the profession and using the Build It Better strategic planning tool to create unifying, cross sector, birth through 8 PD frameworks. The NAEYC Build It Better planning tool evaluates progress in each PD system or framework component using four overarching goals: PD system integration, PD quality assurance, workforce diversity and equity, and compensation parity.

### *Engaging partners to transform Philadelphia’s professional development work and support career progression for our early childhood teachers*

None of these city, state and national professional development goals can be met without building partnerships between the providers of early learning programs, early childhood education professional associations, early childhood teacher education programs, and quality improvement initiatives. Philadelphia is well positioned to make significant strides forward thanks in part to our Mayor’s pre-kindergarten initiative PHLpreK, and the PHMC Early Childhood Workforce Transformation Initiative (ECWTI).

The Philadelphia initiative is raising the bar for early childhood teachers in the city’s universal pre-kindergarten programs, which will require very real career progression for Philadelphia’s early childhood teachers and will offer new opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills, and to earn higher level credentials, including college degrees and state P4 teacher certification.

The ECWTI is using the data gathered and presented in the 2016 [Early Childhood Education Teachers 2.0: Strategies to Transform the Profession](#) report to convene higher education institutions in our region to discuss our state and local early childhood workforce needs and opportunities, to share strong practices, to contribute to local and state advocacy efforts, and to develop ways to address the “Gold Standards” for early childhood teacher education programs presented in the report. Since the report was published, [ECWTI continues to monitor progress](#) on the strategies to transform the early childhood profession and to develop means to replicate models of success.

ECWTI is currently working with the five NAEYC accredited associate degree programs in our region to explore ways that NAEYC accreditation serves as both an indicator and an ongoing improvement structure for many of our local Gold Standards. Current funding is supporting NAEYC accreditation work at the Community College of Philadelphia.

Another group of early childhood faculty and program coordinators came together after the PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) request for proposals to align degree college coursework with infant toddler competencies. Although none of the Philadelphia proposals were funded, this group will form an ECWTI sponsored peer community of practice focused on strengthening infant toddler preparation in our region.

The [Community College of Philadelphia](#), [DVAEYC](#), and [1199c Training Fund](#) are piloting a [new apprenticeship program](#) that will blend on-the-job training and college coursework for currently employed early childhood teachers and lead to completion of an associate degree. This program, cited in recent national ECE blogs and papers, links educational attainment and other milestones to wage steps, in alignment with the CCDBG focus on linking PD to compensation.

Strengths and challenges in statewide articulation agreements were unpacked in the ECWTI report. A number of area community colleges are currently working on articulation agreements with Drexel’s new online early childhood teacher education bachelor degree P4 certification program. And a regional effort in development, in response to a recent request for proposal from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, presents further opportunities for collaboration among institutions of higher education in support of teacher preparation and student transfer from CDA to AA to BA programs. These initiatives have been supported by the re-funding of the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program in Pennsylvania, which generously supports not only course costs for Early Childhood teachers, but also costs related to transportation, child care, books, and time off from work required for academic success.

Philadelphia partners are already deeply engaged in work that supports the new federal requirements for a coherent professional development framework that can provide career progression for our current and future early childhood teachers. Stay tuned – there is more to come!

## SOURCES, RESOURCES, AND MORE INFORMATION

Administration for Children and Families. Overview of 2016 Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule. See § 98.44 Training and Professional Development [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/ccdf\\_final\\_rule\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/ccdf_final_rule_fact_sheet.pdf)

Administration for Children and Families. Child Care Development Fund regulations. See 45CFR 98.44 Training and professional development. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdf-final-regulations>

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Early Childhood Workforce Systems Initiative. Includes links to the 2016 Build It Better: Indicators of Progress to Support Integrated Early Childhood Professional Development Systems and the 2008 Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems. <http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi>

National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. Professional Development Systems Framework. A resource from the National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. <http://grisnetwork.org/sites/all/files/conference-session/resources/386%20Handout%20Frameworks.pdf>

National Women's Law Center. Implementing the Child Care and Development Block Grant Reauthorization: A guide for states <https://nwlc.org/resources/implementing-the-child-care-and-development-block-grant-reauthorization-a-guide-for-states/>

Pennsylvania's State Plan for Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/childcareearlylearning/index.htm>  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/state-plans>

Public Health Management Corporation Early Childhood Education Workforce Transformation Initiative (ECTWI) <http://www.phmc.org/site/newsroom/press/100-press-releases/2016-1/1156-early-childhood-education-workforce-transformation-initiative-released-strategies-to-improve-the-ec-profession>  
[http://melc.org/wp-content/uploads/WPF-report-march-16\\_formatted2.pdf](http://melc.org/wp-content/uploads/WPF-report-march-16_formatted2.pdf)

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Alison Lutton** is a national consultant in early childhood professional development with expertise in integration and alignment of birth-through-8 PD systems and career pathways, higher education quality and articulation, and workforce initiatives. Alison's early childhood background includes work as family child care provider, community college faculty member, and a decade at NAEYC leading higher education standards, higher education accreditation systems, and early childhood workforce systems initiatives. Recent consulting clients include the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning; National Association of State Boards of Education Early Learning Network; Public Health Management Corporation Philadelphia Early Childhood Education Teacher Preparation Transformation Initiative; Virginia Early Childhood Fund and state School Readiness Committee; Zero To Three Infant Toddler Critical Competencies; Connecticut Office for Early Childhood/Division of Early Care and Education cross-sector competencies project; the Texas First 3 Years Articulation project; and the Washington Area Women's Foundation regional competencies project.



**The Early Childhood Action Collective (ECAC)** is an initiative of Public Health Management Corporation, sponsored by the William Penn Foundation. ECAC is a multi-disciplinary consortium comprising researchers, policy experts, and practitioners who share a commitment to creating a better future for Philadelphia's children by informing policy and practice decisions to help move Philadelphia's early childhood education

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the William Penn Foundation.