

MATCH



MENTORING, **A**DVISING, **T**EACHING, **C**OACHING, **C**ONSULTING, **H**ELPING
Vermont's system of early childhood and afterschool professional support

The purpose of creating the MATCH Network in Vermont is:

To enhance the competency, professional growth and satisfaction of individual practitioners, and to promote program quality through customized support for effective practices. These changes will positively impact the children and families in their care.

This will be accomplished by a network of professionals who provide quality mentoring, consulting, coaching, technical assistance and information to professionals – and those seeking to be professionals, in the field of early childhood and afterschool services across Vermont.

A MATCH Professional is a qualified professional with the knowledge, skills and dispositions¹ to give individualized support to programs and professionals (or those entering the field), in early childhood or afterschool programs. *MATCH Professionals* work to support the process of change through:

- observation and reflection,
- assistance in planning and goal setting,
- helping to solve problems,
- providing information and resources, and
- responsive relationship building

¹Knowledge, and skills may be content specific, such as knowledge of regulations, infectious diseases or grant writing; or skills in implementing play-based routines, toddler room arrangement or developing a program evaluation. The MATCH network is multidisciplinary, including professionals with a broad range of knowledge and skills across many disciplines. MATCH professionals share common positive dispositions and competencies that enable them to effectively customize support to individuals and programs using a variety of strategies.

What is MATCH? It is Vermont's name for the professionals who provide individualized support to programs or to individuals working in early childhood or afterschool services. The name was created by a state-wide workgroup of 20 people with diverse roles. Each workgroup member also worked with someone else in the state who added their perspective and ideas to the workgroup. The workgroup, facilitated by Northern Lights Career Development Center, met 5 full days over this past year to consider how to define and integrate these "MATCH" professionals into our professional development system.

Why not "mentor"? Or "coach"? Or "consultant"? The workgroup examined terms and definitions from other states, what terms research used and what Vermonters thought about these terms. We came to realize that there are conflicting definitions for each term, and many have the same definition. There are strong feelings for and against each of these terms. The person providing individualized support may use mentoring, then coaching and then provide technical assistance – all in one day with one person. We came to see these terms as strategies, rather than as roles. Finally, we wanted to include everyone- all those already called coaches, mentors, consultants, and others, no matter what term was used. For these reasons, we chose a new inclusive term: the MATCH professional who uses a range of strategies (mentoring, coaching, etc.) as needed. We hope this term will also help people think about the importance of the match, the relationship between the professional providing guidance and the person gaining support to develop and change.

What else did the workgroup do? They identified the scope and definitions of what we mean by individualized professional support. They also defined the skills, knowledge and dispositions needed by MATCH professionals; identified who provides these type of supports to early childhood and afterschool professionals now in Vermont; and surveyed these professionals to learn more about their work, their training, and their needs. The survey identified that a MATCH network was valuable. Respondents also valued having competencies, support and training for MATCH network participants. The workgroup identified parameters and suggested criteria for those in a MATCH registry. They also generated evaluation questions, collected resources and research, made recommendations for financing MATCH professionals and defined next steps toward integrating MATCH professionals into the early childhood and afterschool professional systems in Vermont. They also had the ideas that created the first side of this document!

What's next? The next steps are to a) to continue to seek and expand partners in this work and hear from the field; b) finalize MATCH competencies and design training based on these competencies for those providing individualized support; c) to continue to find opportunities to integrate MATCH relationships into training and other supports that enhance professional development of the workforce. d) to recommend criteria to enable those receiving or providing individualized support to "count" these activities as professional development hours for child care licensing, STARS applications etc.; e) to design and implement a MATCH registry aligned with the current instructor registry. The Professional Preparation and Development Committee and other groups, will oversee this work which will be facilitated by Northern Lights Career Development Center.