

A Guide to Creating an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

for early childhood and afterschool professionals
3-2010

The purpose of an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) is to support thoughtful, personal and professional growth. An IPDP answers the questions:

- What do I already know, what skills do I have, what do I need to know and learn?
- What specifically do I want to learn and develop next?
- How will I do this?
- When will I check in to see if I did what I planned?

In order for an IPDP to be useful it should be current and updated regularly. Be sure to put a date on the IPDP you create, and plan to review and update it at least annually. Remember, it is a *plan*, so it should always include things you have not yet done. Examples of completed IPDP's and formats can be found on the Northern Lights Website <http://northernlightscdc.org> under: PLANNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT-IPDP

This is a guide. In addition to the resources listed here, be sure to get help from your supervisor, regional resource professional or others who have created IPDP documents, especially if it is your first IPDP.

If an IPDP is being submitted as part of an application for a Child Development Division grant or bonus, or to the Northern Lights Career Development Center for a Level or Credential Certificate, the IPDP must have been updated within the past three months.

SELF- REFLECTION: An IPDP shows that the person who wrote it practiced self-reflection, and over time, grew in her or his skills and knowledge. How does your plan show this? Reflection may be seen in personal statements in your plan or in your response to feedback from supervisors, parents, directors, colleagues, trainers, licensers, or mentors.

Four Key Parts of an Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

All are required for Child Development Division & Northern Lights Career Development Center applications.

1) Self Assessment: What do I already know, what skills do I have, what areas do I want to improve?

Consider the trainings and other education you have completed, and the knowledge and skills you currently have. This assessment process should include a broad range of topic areas needed to work in your field. You can complete this self-assessment by using a comprehensive list of knowledge and skills, such as the competency documents below, or by working with your supervisor, director, mentor, etc. There are a variety of competency documents that describe a broad range of topic areas. These include but are not limited to:

- The 5 Vermont Early Childhood or Afterschool Core Competencies areas
- The list of 8 Child Development Association Credential (CDA) subject areas.
- The Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies
- Program Director Competencies for early childhood and afterschool directors

All of the above competency frameworks can be viewed and downloaded from www.northernlightscdc.org under CORE COMPETENCIES.

After you complete the self-assessment, you will have a description or list of what you already know and can do, and what you want to learn more about.

FOR EXAMPLE, under CHILD DEVELOPMENT you might write:

I KNOW: differences in development between ages 2- 5, I have a basic knowledge of brain development in the early years; I know about differences in language/hearing development for children with multiple ear infections.

I WANT TO KNOW: what causes differences in behavior in the children in my program, more about temperament and how to better collect information about each child's development every day.

2) Prioritizing and Goal Setting: What do I want to learn and develop next?

The self-assessment of your knowledge and skills helps you identify specific areas that you would like to target for improvement. You might decide there is a skill that is important to your daily work, or an area of knowledge you want to develop over time. After you review the identified list, choose which ones you want to do first and which ones later. This process of prioritizing will help your plan be manageable and meaningful. Now, choose 2-5 areas you want to develop and clearly describe your goals.

FOR EXAMPLE, you might decide that GOAL #1 is:

Incorporate regular observation and documentation of each child at least weekly.

3) Strategies and Resources: How will I do this?

Once you have your goals and priorities, decide how you will accomplish them. You will need to do some homework so you can be specific about what you will do to achieve your goal. Your strategies should include specific activities to help you accomplish your goals such as: gathering materials, interviewing specific people, visiting specific places to observe, contacting specific organizations and agencies, researching specific trainings to attend, etc. Also add resources such as written materials you will read, websites you will explore, funding needed to attend events etc.

FOR EXAMPLE, under GOAL #1 you might write:

RESOURCES and STRATEGIES: a) contact Sue at XYZ child care to learn how she has set up an observation and documentation system; b) ask if lending library has the book, The Power of Observation- if not check on line for used prices and order; c) look in the BFIS course calendar for training on Observations of Children or Temperament

4) Time line: When will I check in to see if I did what I planned?

Now that you have clear goals, prioritized by which are the most important and specifically how you will achieve them, you need to add when you plan to complete each goal. Put a month and year next to each goal and/or strategy indicating when you expect to complete it. Plan to check in to see that you did what you planned, on those dates.

FOR EXAMPLE, under GOAL #1 you might write:

End of March 2010: contact Sue, look in 'BFIS course calendar, check lending library

May 1, 2010: start documenting observations

June 1, 2010: review documentation system and check back with Sue, finish book

Sept. 1, 2010: evaluate observations, what I learned and how I am using them.

Remember, your IPDP should be current and updated regularly. Your IPDP is part of the cycle of professional growth, where you continually review, update and check in on your progress.