

Core Competencies:

The Massachusetts Core Competencies are intended to apply to child care centers, out-of-school time programs, family child care homes, public preschool programs, private schools, preschool and kindergarten programs, and Head Start programs. Each of the 8 Core Competency Areas describe the knowledge and skills early care and education and out-of-school time educators must be able to demonstrate in their work with children, families, and colleagues.

Because inclusion of all children and youth and cultural competency are essential components of competency, related indicators are integrated throughout the 8 core competency areas rather than creating separate core competency areas for these important topics.

Core Competency Areas:

There are 8 areas of competence that are addressed in the Massachusetts Core Competencies for early education and care and out-of-school time educators. Each competency area is a broad topic area that is essential caring for and educating young children and youth.

Area 1: Understanding the Growth and Development of Children and Youth

- Understanding how children and youth learn, the adult's role in positively supporting individual growth and development, the implications of early brain development, and applying research and human development theories regarding children and youth.
- Creating a safe, nurturing, and challenging learning environment that encompasses developmentally appropriate practices, establishes foundations for future growth, and engages young people in building social skills and knowledge.

Area 2: Guiding and Interacting with Children and Youth

- Using appropriate guidance techniques for specific ages and developmental stages based on realistic and developmentally appropriate expectations for the behavior of children and youth and appropriate guidance techniques for specific ages and developmental stages.
- Recognizing factors that impact behavior and implementing strategies to help children and youth develop self-regulation, self-concept, coping mechanisms, self-comfort skills, and positive interactions with their peers and adults.

Area 3: Partnering with Families and Communities

- Understanding diverse family structures and influences, and using culturally competent practices to support and communicate with individual children and families.
- Building respectful, reciprocal relationships through a shared understanding with families and cultivating meaningful family and community involvement.
- Connecting families to community resources, and taking advantage of opportunities for appropriate, positive collaborations with other family, school, and community services.
- Collaborating and working with community resources such as public schools.

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Area 4: Health, Safety, and Nutrition

- Ensuring children and youth's safety, promoting sound health practices, and recognizing and responding to child abuse and neglect.
- Providing nutritious meals and snacks.
- Implementing appropriate prevention, preparedness, and health and safety practices.

Area 5: Learning Environments and Implementing Curriculum

- Recognizing characteristics of high quality environments and utilizing strategies such as: consistent schedules and routines, transition activities for moving from one activity to another, interesting materials and activities appropriate by age group, and arranging a classroom to enhance children's learning.
- Understanding developmentally appropriate curriculum models that prepare children and youth for success in school.

Area 6: Observation, Assessment, and Documentation

- Understanding the goals, benefits and uses of observation and assessment in early childhood and out-of-school time environments.
- Using observation, assessment, and documentation to adapt curricula to meet the individual learning needs of children.
- Using systematic observations, documentation, and other effective and appropriate assessment strategies in partnership with families and other professionals serving the same children.

Area 7: Program Planning and Development

- Understanding the importance of relationships and positive communication among colleagues working together to create a nurturing learning environment for children and youth.
- Planning, organizing, and implementing best business practices including a shared understanding with staff and families of regulations, applicable laws, policies, staff supervision, and quality standards.
- Modeling behaviors and supporting staff through professional development plans, building healthy relationships with colleagues and families, providing developmentally appropriate practices, and connecting with community resources.

Area 8: Professionalism and Leadership

- Knowing and adhering to ethical guidelines and professional standards
- Practicing continuous, collaborative learning that shares knowledge, relies on reflective practices, makes informed decisions, integrates knowledge from a variety of sources and advocates for best practices.
- Mentoring others to develop leadership skills.
- Maintaining confidentiality.