

# Early Learning Training Recommendations Promoting Child Care Quality



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## Training and Professional Development of the Workforce

Studies show that the single biggest factor in the quality of the child care setting is the education and training of the provider or staff.

- The amount of formal education and training is a stronger predictor of quality care than the provider's experience, group size, ratio of children to adults, or percent of infants in the care setting.<sup>1</sup>
- Caregivers with specialized training are more likely to be nurturing, reinforce early literacy skills and engage, challenge and enhance children's learning.<sup>2</sup>

A recent *Science* article suggested that state Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) should include measurement of teacher-child interactions to better gauge children's learning (child outcomes).<sup>3</sup>

Not just education and training, but also technical assistance that includes coaching and mentoring can help ensure that education and training lead to more effective practice in the classroom.

Many child care providers in Virginia do not have specialized training in early childhood education and related topics. Few have the benefit of ongoing coaching and technical assistance. Virginia requires 16 hours of annual training, however, national experts (including pediatricians and child developmental specialists) recommend at least 30 hours of initial training and 24 hours of annual training.<sup>4</sup>

Do the hours matter? Course content is related to the hours – for example, the Red Cross has a basic course in CPR certification that is 6 hours long – the course content and related hours are based on the Red Cross' estimate of how to most effectively change behavior (certify that an individual could perform CPR effectively in a crisis).

**Training is important because it helps ensure that providers have the knowledge and skills to offer quality care.** Annual training builds on initial training and reinforces effective practices and techniques (and offers a chance for providers to receive the most up to date information and instruction).

- Training courses should be intentional, sequential and lead toward a higher level of skill or certification.
- Technical assistance (coaching and mentoring) are important to ensure that what is learned is effectively used.

Virginia is working on a statewide progression of professional development, including the Virginia Early Childhood Professionals' Career Lattice and a trainer and training approval process.

## Early Learning Guidelines

Virginia has Early Learning Guidelines for children from birth to age three and also from age three to age five. The Early Learning Guidelines are part of the state's quality rating system but not the state licensing process. For child care providers to better understand and use the ELGs, training should be required so that all care settings have providers with knowledge and understanding about the guidelines.



## Developmental Screenings

Through the state quality rating system Infant and Toddler Specialist Network, Infant and Toddler social/emotional grants and trainings about inclusion, child care providers are encouraged to conduct preliminary screenings of children in their care. However, resources and supports for

providers to use developmental screenings are not required.

Seventy percent of children with disabilities are not identified until public school.<sup>5</sup> By that time, the earliest years where intervention can play a role are lost. For a child with a developmental delay or a disability, it is important to reach him or her as early as possible.

## Recommendations for the General Assembly

**Child Care Aware of Virginia recommends that the General Assembly review state child care policies and strengthen the requirements for child care licensing to ensure that all children whose families need child care are in a safe setting that promotes their healthy development.**

### Training and Professional Development

- Adopt a framework to strengthen the professional development of the early childhood workforce including:
  - A set of workforce competency standards for child care providers;
  - An evidence-based training framework that is designed to promote children's learning and development and school readiness and to improve child outcomes;
  - Training courses that are intentional, sequential, and lead toward a higher level of skill or certification;
  - A statewide progression of professional development, integrating the state's Early Childhood Professionals' Career Lattice;
  - A trainer and training approval process that includes quality assurance;
  - Requiring participation in the state professional development registry;
  - Support for programs to strengthen the workforce such as T.E.A.C.H. and W.A.G.E.\$;

- Technical assistance as either follow up to training to ensure that training is translated to practice or independent TA to better meet the needs of each program to ensure quality settings and provider interactions with children promoting healthy development; and
  - Training on the Early Learning Guidelines for all providers and integrating the Early Learning Guidelines into licensed child care programs.
- Based on Caring for our Children, increase Virginia's training requirement from 16 hours to 30 hours of initial training and 24 hours of annual training.



### Promoting Healthy Child Development

- Limit screen time for children in all child care programs and require daily physical activity.
- Support training for child care providers in Ages and Stages to assist in earlier identification of children who could benefit from early intervention programs.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Burchinal, M.C., and S. Kontos. "Structural Predictors of Child Care Quality in Child Care Homes," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 17:889-107, 2002. <http://bit.ly/1d711P4>

<sup>2</sup> Howes, C. "Caregiver Behavior in Center and Family Day Care." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*. 4:99-107, 1983.

<http://bit.ly/17BonW1>

<sup>3</sup> Sabol, T.J., Soliday Hong, S.L., Pianta, R.C., Burchinal, M.R., *Can Rating Pre-K Programs Predict Children's Learning? Science*. August 2013. <http://bit.ly/1a2JYdX>

<sup>4</sup> National Resource Center for Health and Safety. *Stepping Stones to Caring for Our Children* (2013). <http://bit.ly/H84nEo>

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care, *Proposed Revisions to CCDF Regulations*. May 2013

Child Care Aware® of Virginia is a community-based network of early care and education specialists whose purpose is to deliver services to families, child care professionals and communities to increase the accessibility, availability, and quality of child care.

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