

STANDARDS IN ACTION

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS (1302.91(E)(1))



THE CURRENT SITUATION

The staff at the Willow Spring Child Care program are delighted to have been awarded a grant to partner with their local Early Head Start program as a new Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships program. Marie, Willow Spring's center director, recently attended an orientation meeting with the EHS staff to learn about the requirements of the program and discuss items in the Partnership Agreement. Everyone was excited to see the launch of the partnership and Marie could already feel the kindness and support from the Early Head Start staff. But Marie started to worry when the group discussed staff qualifications. She knew she ran a quality program, but three of her teachers did not hold an Infant-Toddler Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, a key requirement for the program. She was worried about how to tell Claudia, John, and April that they would have to do additional work as part of the Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships.

THE SOLUTION: FIRST THINGS FIRST

So after the orientation, Marie contacted Ruben, Professional Development Manager at the Early Head Start program, to ask for help. She asked Ruben to help her think through these questions:

What are the specific requirements for the Infant-Toddler CDA?

- Can the teachers use training time to meet the requirements, or should they go to the community college? Who is available to help the teachers work through the process?
- How will we pay for this additional expense? Who will take care of the children while the teachers are busy with professional development?

Ruben shared that the Partnership program directors were planning to meet the following week to discuss strategies that they could use to support teachers in the program. Ruben invited Marie to join the meeting. Marie felt hopeful but was still worried about how Claudia, John, and April would react to the new requirements. At the Partnership meeting the following week, Marie couldn't believe her luck. The other directors were very supportive and offered ideas to help Marie with the issues she faced. They also told her about the Infant-Toddler CDA

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requirements and how they had supported their staff in the past. They recommended that Marie encourage the teachers in her program to achieve the CDA through college coursework rather than training, because they may want to continue on toward an associate's degree in the future. Ruben was at the meeting as well, and he shared that the Early Head Start program had some additional funding to help support staff qualification goals. He wrote down all the questions and concerns from the group and then asked the group to brainstorm ideas for how the money could be used.

The group generated these ideas:

- Ask the teachers to enroll in the T.E.A.C.H program. This program would help to pay for community college costs, books, release time, and transportation costs. The directors agreed that they would be able to pay for a salary increase when the teachers achieved the CDA milestone.
- Use some of the Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships funding to pay for an “Education Navigator” who would support teachers through the CDA process, arrange study sessions, develop professional development plans, and advocate for them to ensure that the community college classes met the needs of working adult students.
- Use the rest of the Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships funding to pay for substitute staff who could help out in the classroom while the teachers were busy with their CDA work.
- Look into finding a professional development specialist who could ensure a timely CDA verification process.

THE SOLUTION: NEXT STEPS

Marie was very excited to share the news with the teachers back at the center. During their reflective supervision time, she told each teacher about the CDA requirement and the supports that will be available to help them to achieve this goal. Claudia and April shared with Marie that they had always wanted to go back to school and that this opportunity would fulfill a lifetime dream. They were excited to get started and felt motivated by the chance to advance their careers. John was not so sure. He reminded Marie that he was “not good at math” and told her that he was nervous about going to college. No one in his family had ever been to college and he wasn't sure that he could do it. Marie said she understood his concerns and that she would be there to help him every step of the way.



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THE SOLUTION: THE STORY CONTINUES

In the meantime, Ruben was hard at work with planning for the professional development supports that the directors suggested. He contacted the community college and found out that Beth, a part-time faculty member at the college, was interested in helping the Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships teachers. He asked her if she would be willing to serve as the Education Navigator and she enthusiastically agreed to help. Ruben worked with Beth to create a contract for her work, and then set up a time for Beth to meet with the center directors and teachers who would be involved with the initiative.



When Beth met with the teachers, she was very impressed by their level of commitment to educating young children and she wanted to make sure that they were successful in their college courses. She told the group about T.E.A.C.H., the college registration process, CDA requirements, and showed them some websites that might be helpful. Beth suggested to the group that they consider themselves to be a “CDA Cohort” so that they could encourage each other, help each other with studying, and keep each other accountable. The teachers agreed that it was a good idea to work toward the CDA goal as a team, and were eager to join the Cohort. Beth said that the first meeting would be spent getting to know each other, applying for TEACH scholarships, and reviewing the courses that were coming up in the spring semester at the college. Beth set up a regular time for the Cohort to meet and the directors promised to allow staff to take time off from work to attend the Cohort meetings and classes.

After the meeting, Beth noticed that John was especially quiet during the meeting, so she approached him to introduce herself. John shared that he was hopeful about college, but also felt a little bit scared. He thought that the CDA Cohort would be helpful but still was worried about the math classes. Beth suggested that they meet for coffee to discuss his concerns, and he felt a sense of relief almost immediately. Beth knew that the road ahead would be bumpy for some of the students, but that the first step of getting started is often the hardest to achieve. The Willow Spring Child Care CDA Cohort was on the way to success!

SELECTED RESOURCES:

- Early Educator Central <https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov>
- Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships on ECLKC <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/early-head-start-child-care-partnerships-programs>
- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center <http://teachecnationalcenter.org>



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