

Completing Your Annual Professional Development Plan

A practical companion guide for reflection, goal setting, support, and follow-up

1. Purpose and Getting Started

The Annual Professional Development Plan helps early care and education professionals reflect on strengths, identify meaningful areas for growth, plan realistic next steps, and review progress throughout the year.

Before beginning, consider:

- What do I do well?
- What would I like to learn more about?
- What challenge would I like to address?
- How could growth in this area benefit children, families, coworkers, or the program?

Keep the plan practical

Choose goals that connect to your work and can reasonably be completed within the selected timeframe. Review and update the plan during the year rather than waiting until the final review.

2. About You, Education, Credentials, and COLT

Complete the basic information

Add your name, date of hire, title or position, classroom or age group, hours worked each week, and months worked each year.

- Confirm whether education and credential information is current in COLT.
- Use the Education and Self-Reported Credential form when information needs to be updated.
- Review this information annually and whenever it changes.

Review education and credentials

Record your highest level of education, area of study, current credentials, and expiration dates when applicable.

3. Professional Reflection

Think about knowledge, skills, relationships, routines, or practices that support children, families, coworkers, or the program. Select the Core Content Subject Areas in which you feel most confident, then identify one area that could make a meaningful difference in your professional practice.

Reflection starters:

- I am most confident when I...
- A practice that works well for me is...
- I would like to learn more about...
- I want to feel more confident with...
- Children, families, or coworkers would benefit if I...
- One challenge I would like to address is...

4. Writing a Strong Professional Growth Goal

State what you want to accomplish and explain why the goal matters to your professional growth or practice.

- Use action words such as improve, strengthen, learn, complete, apply, develop, or increase.
- Focus on one main outcome for each goal.
- Choose short-term for 3-9 months or long-term for 12 months or longer.
- Add the target completion date and the date the goal was established.

5. Planning Action Steps and Defining Success

Action steps: What will you do?

Action steps are the specific activities that will move you toward the goal.

- Attend training or professional learning.
- Complete college coursework.
- Use Child Care Aware supports and resources.
- Participate in coaching, mentoring, observation, or practice.
- Apply a new strategy or review professional resources.

Success: How will you know?

Choose an outcome that can be observed, completed, demonstrated, or documented.

- Complete coursework, training, or a credential.
- Apply a new strategy in practice.
- Demonstrate increased knowledge or skill.
- Document a change in practice or program support.

6. Child Care Aware Coaches and Other Resources

Select supports that are relevant to the goal and available to the participant. Different Child Care Aware coaches may support different needs.

Professional Development Coach Professional growth planning, credentials, scholarships, coursework, and related resources.	Training Coach Training-related guidance, trainer resources, and professional-learning support.
Quality Coach Support connected to program quality goals and continuous quality improvement.	Health and Safety Coach Support connected to health, safety, nutrition, and related program practices.

Other possible supports: technical assistance, professional learning opportunities, college coursework, scholarships, mentors, professional resources, other Child Care Aware staff, and community resources.

7. The Director's Role in the PD Plan

Support planning and reflection

Help connect professional interests and growth areas to job responsibilities, classroom or program needs, and available supports.

- Encourage meaningful and achievable goals.
- Ask guiding questions rather than writing the goal for the participant.
- Clarify what support the program can provide.

Support progress over time

Use periodic check-ins to discuss progress, barriers, needed changes, and accomplishments.

- Help identify time, training, coaching, mentoring, or resources.
- Revise action steps when circumstances change.
- Recognize growth and complete the plan acknowledgment.

8. Reviewing Progress and Completing the Plan

Use the Progress Tracking page during periodic check-ins. The plan may be adjusted when needs, responsibilities, or opportunities change.

During each review Add the review date. Mark the status: On track, Revised / Updated, or Goal met. Describe progress, barriers, changes, and next steps.	When a goal is met Record what was learned. Describe how professional practice changed. Note accomplishments or follow-up needs.
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9. Quick Goal Review

■ Is the goal clear and connected to professional growth or practice?	■ Are the action steps specific enough to know what to do next?
■ Is the timeframe realistic?	■ Have needed supports, including Child Care Aware coaches when appropriate, been identified?
■ Is there a clear way to know when the goal has been achieved?	■ Have the participant and director agreed on how progress will be reviewed?

10. Director and Participant Discussion Prompts

- What is going well?
- What support is needed next?
- What is getting in the way?
- Does the goal or an action step need to change?
- What progress or accomplishment should be recognized?
- When will progress be reviewed again?

11. Using Additional Notes

Use the Additional Notes section of the plan to record information that does not fit naturally elsewhere, including:

- Goal revisions and the reason for the change.
- Professional learning completed.
- Coaching, technical assistance, or other support received.
- Accomplishments and changes in professional practice.
- Important updates or follow-up discussions.

Final reminder

The participant and director should keep the plan focused on professional growth. A useful plan provides clear direction, identifies reasonable support, and creates a record of progress over time.

Questions or Need Support?

Visit Find Your Coach to connect with a Child Care Aware of Kentucky coach in your region:

<https://www.childcareawareky.org/about-child-care-aware/coaches/>