

From Hire to Inspire: Strengthening Professional Learning Systems

Welcome to...

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain how Montana's early childhood training systems connect and support workforce development
- Identify effective strategies for onboarding new staff into professional learning expectations
- Locate and use professional development options to support individual and program goals
- Navigate ChildCareTraining.org to complete and manage staff training requirements
- Implement systems that support accountability and long-term professional growth

About the Presenters

While you can read about my qualifications and background in my conference bio, I currently work as an Online training Specialist for Child Care Resources. I design online trainings and work with providers and directors across the state on technical assistance. I team up with many of the "acronyms" that we will talk about during this session to provide support in the early childhood profession. In the last 25 years, I have been a volunteer, a teacher, a curriculum coordinator, a center assistant director, and a family child care owner. As well as a mother of three boys! As a level 9 on the Practioners Registry, I have experienced the in's and out's of our Montana support system.

Target Audience

Responding to Technical Assistance calls from providers across the state, there are certain questions that are repeated often. Have you ever wondered:

- Who do I contact about my question?
- Why are there so many early childhood organizations and what do they do? All the acronyms!
- How does the system work?
- How do I get my employees to complete their training?
- How can I retain staff?

This session is appropriate for: Early childhood program directors, administrators, trainers, and educators who are responsible for hiring and training staff, supporting professional growth, or maintaining training compliance.

1. ECE Training in Montana

Let's start with exploring how these major systems fit together, including:

- The role of ECSB and Licensing
- CCT, ECP, and Spark Montana
- How these systems impact hiring, training, and retention

Do we have anyone in the session that may represent one of these acronyms? Have that person share what they do and how it supports Montana providers.

Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB)

ECSB attends to the quality, affordability and accessibility of early care and education in Montana, with focused efforts on coordinated systems to best meet the needs of young children, their families, and the professionals who work on behalf of young children and families.

Our Programs:

- [Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship](#)
- [Child & Adult Care Food Program](#)
- [Child Care Licensing](#)
- [Child Care Referral](#)
- [Head Start](#)
- [Montana Bright Futures Birth to Five](#)
- [Montana Milestones](#)
- [Quality Initiatives](#)
- [MAQCS](#)

Child Care Licensing

Let's look at Child Care Licensing, as they will be the main point of contact for Montana providers.

The Child Care Licensing (CCL) program helps providers use the licensing portal to apply, update records, and stay compliant. CCL supports licensed, registered, and prospective providers with portal guidance, required documents, and next steps. The program also conducts pre-inspections, annual inspections, ongoing monitoring, and follows up on complaints.

Montana Early Childhood Project

The Practitioner Registry, through the Montana Early Childhood Project, is a statewide registry that is used to help develop and track a knowledgeable and skilled child care workforce based on an individual's verified professional achievements. Registries provide important data about the workforce to help raise the status of early care and education as a viable and unique profession in our society, and advocate for better compensation for the field.

The department is federally monitored and must track and report professional development training to the Federal Office of Child Care. Per CCDF requirements, Montana must show that 13 categories of health and safety training are completed within 90 days of hire, and that on-going health and safety training is completed by all child care staff in our state.

****Your Registry membership is your individual membership that moves with you even if you change employers.**

Spark Montana

SPARK Montana has been commissioned by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) to provide quality technical assistance services to child care programs and professionals across the state. Their Help Desk can support you with:

- General questions about early childhood systems in Montana.
- Navigating licensing or state systems.
- Understanding Montana's Quality Improvement System.
- Finding approved training or professional development
- Connecting you with the right TA Specialist or partner organization.
- Providing fingerprinting options

Child Care Training

ChildCareTraining.org is the home of Montana's early childhood distance learning, including state-required orientation courses. Early childhood professionals have a vitally important job; we strive to offer accessible professional development statewide. We believe our courses supply training of the highest caliber. All materials are authored by professionals in their field. Each course is also facilitated by an instructor who provides individualized feedback to participants.

Through course activities, students gain practical application and knowledge of the material, which we hope will inspire improvement in overall practice. We can help you save time and money associated with traveling to workshops. And you can complete your training in the comfort of your own home 24-7.

Other supports:

Zero to Five

Provides business advising, targeted training, mentorship, shared services coordination, and technical assistance to strengthen programs and build community capacity.

MFCN – The Montana Family Childcare Network

The Montana Family Childcare Network is a collaboration of early childhood interests, who represent Montana's Family Childcare Educators and advocates with united voices on behalf of all children, families, and family childcare educators, to promote and encourage quality professional family childcare and early education through professional education, mentoring, and advocacy.

mtaeyc | Montana Association for the Education of Young Children

The Montana Association for the Education of Young Children (mtaeyc) is an organization of early childhood professionals working to solve local, state, and national issues that affect children and families. **Goals**

- To improve early care and education through advocacy.
- To promote, provide and support professional development for early childhood professionals.
- To provide and promote leadership in early care and education.

So, what do these supports look like working together?

This is a VERY general description of each.

Questions?

Handout of Team Contacts

2. New Staff Orientation Training

Practical tools for building strong starts include:

- How to introduce professional development expectations early - What staff need to know from day one
- Understanding training confidentiality and academic integrity
- How to create a professional development friendly workplace environment

How to introduce professional development expectations early

Common questions I hear from new providers:

- **Does my Registry Renewal match my Licensing Renewal date?**

Your Registry membership renewal dates will not always match with your License renewal dates. Please keep track of your training hours by checking out your Training Hour Requirements report under the Reports tab of your Registry account. This report will tell you which training hours will count towards your next renewal.

- **How do I make sure completed trainings show on my Registry?**

Add your ECP Registry ID to your profiles so your training will be transferred to the Registry!

- **How much training do I have to do?**

Be upfront and clear about orientation and professional development training. Let's see what that looks like.

What staff need to know from day one

37.96.914 ORIENTATION TRAINING

(1) All staff and owners included in child-to-staff ratios must complete department-approved orientation training. Orientation training includes 30-day and 90-day training requirements.

(2) Within 30 days of hire and before providing unsupervised care to children, the following training is required:

(a) infant, child, and adult CPR, infant choking response, and pediatric first aid. CPR certification must be completed in a hands-on setting. Alternatively, staff can provide verification of current infant, child, and adult CPR, infant choking response, and pediatric first aid certification from the American Heart Association, American Red Cross, or other CCLapproved entity;

(b) if the child care license or registration permits care for infants, prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and use of safe sleep practices;

(c) if the child care license or registration permits care for infants or toddlers, prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma.

(3) The staff and owners of licensed and registered child care facilities providing care exclusively to school-age children are not required to take infant CPR, infant choking response, sudden infant death syndrome, safe sleep, and shaken baby syndrome training.

Staff must complete the 30-day orientation courses before they may be left alone in a room with the children in care.

The Infant Safety Essentials course is not required for staff that work at facilities that provide care exclusively to children age 5 and over. Some of the information in the shaken Baby Syndrome/Abusive Head Trauma information applies to children over 2.

(4) Within 90 days of hire, the following orientation training is required:

(a) prevention and control of infectious diseases, including immunization;

(b) child development;

(c) administration of medication, consistent with standards for parental/guardian consent;

(d) prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions;

(e) building and physical premises safety;

(f) emergency preparedness and response;

(g) proper handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials;

(h) appropriate disposal of toxic (bio-contaminants) materials including blood, bodily fluids, and other infectious materials;

(i) transportation; and

(j) recognizing and mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect to proper state authorities.

(5) Orientation training will be counted toward annual training requirements.

37.96.915 ANNUAL TRAINING

(1) All staff and owners working more than 500 hours annually at any licensed or registered child care facility must successfully complete required annual training as defined in the Practitioner Registry.

(a) Staff and owners of licensed child care centers, and registered group and family child care facility must complete 16 hours of annual training.

(b) Staff and owners of licensed school-age care or registered FFN providers must complete eight hours of annual training.

(2) The training must be approved through the Practitioner Registry.

(3) Education and training must relate to the Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base.

37.96.918 HEALTH AND SAFETY REFRESHER COURSE

(1) All staff required to complete orientation training, including RCE and FFN providers, must complete a department-approved health and safety refresher course at least every three years. The health and safety review course will count toward the annual training required in ARM 37.96.915.

Let's look at [Childcaretraining.org](https://childcaretraining.org) shall we?

- Create an account
 - Do not create more than one account. We are unable to sync them.
 - It is suggested to not use a program specific email incase you change employers in the future. It will be harder to have access to you account without access to your email.
- Agree to policies
 - Please read through these as you agree to them. They contain very important information about how to use our site. The more you know, the less you will have to use the help button in the future.
- Find courses
 - Our courses are broken down in the catalog in many ways.
 - We offer many FREE courses for Montana Providers.
- Completing courses and grading
 - Don't forget to check your gradebook!
 - You can retake courses after 3 years.
- Support
 - This little blue button may just connect you to me!
- What happens next?

How long does it take to complete a class? This is a very important question and something that every staff member should know the process of:

- Enrolled for 60 days.
- Complete and submit activities
- Allow three business days for grading
- Confirm a passing grade in the gradebook of 70% or higher or read feedback and resubmit activity for a higher grade.
- Confirm accuracy of your Professional Development Record

It is recommended that participants complete training at least two weeks prior to their enrollment ending (first 45 days).

Understanding training confidentiality and academic integrity

ECP and CCT accounts are individual and separate from child care employment. These records follow the individual wherever they go.

Directors have an account to ensure completion of required trainings and yearly required hours. We can confirm or deny completion, we are not able to provide:

- The grade they received
- Access to view their account
- Access to or the ability to change their login information

Providers must complete their own orientation courses individually.

3. Time to Inspire! Continuing Professional Development

- Why is training staff so important?
- How do you inspire your staff?
- What strategies can I use to promote a supportive program culture?

It's a common mistake that even the most successful businesses make: not formally training new employees or providing a positive professional development culture. Some companies believe that new employees will learn as they go, on the job, foregoing a new hire training program. While there is plenty of space for [on-the-job training](#), knowing how to train new employees effectively means happier employees and better retention rates.

Turnover Rates

Consider this, 20% of workers in the U.S [leave their job within 45 days](#) of hire. Recent data show that **childcare worker turnover in the U.S. is significantly higher than in most other occupations**, with **annual turnover rates averaging 30–40%** across the sector [childcarepath.com](#). Some centers — especially those serving younger children (birth–5)— see **turnover exceeding 50%** [Institute of Education Sciences \(IES\)+1](#).

This high turnover is driven by several factors:

- **Low wages** — childcare workers earn the 10th lowest median annual wage among 825 occupations, often below a living wage for a single adult with one child [Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland](#).
- **Limited benefits** and advancement opportunities.
- **Physically and emotionally demanding work** with limited professional growth.
- **Burnout** and better-paying opportunities elsewhere.

While we can't address low wages, at least in this session, we can go through strategies that address the others.

Why is this important? High turnover can disrupt continuity of care, increase training costs, and affect children's learning and emotional well-being.

Impact on children and programs:

- Frequent teacher changes can disrupt routines, attachment, and learning [childcarepath.com](#).
- Loss of institutional knowledge and increased stress for remaining staff [acf.gov](#).
- Higher costs for hiring, training, and replacing staff [acf.gov](#).

Time and Money are a huge barrier for a complete orientation. However, how much time and money do you lose with repeated staff turnover?

During the first 30-days is a great time for staff to have a thorough orientation. Make sure you take the time to orientate your staff completely.

Resources: New Employee Orientation Checklists

Did you know: During one of their orientation courses, participants will need to complete safety checklists of the facility. If they have never had the opportunity to observe, this will be very difficult for them to do.

Strategies that promote a positive and supportive work culture

Encouraging staff retention is less about one big solution and more about creating an environment where people **feel valued, supported, and able to grow**. When those three things exist consistently, employees are far more likely to stay. Here are practical strategies that tend to make the biggest difference

Build a Culture of Appreciation

People rarely leave places where they feel genuinely valued.

- Give specific praise regularly (“I noticed how calmly you handled that parent conversation.”)
- Celebrate milestones (work anniversaries, certifications, completed training)
- Create peer recognition boards or shout-outs during meetings

Small, frequent recognition often matters more than occasional large rewards.

Mentoring and Buddy Systems:

Enlisting mentors or buddies to provide new employees with guidance, assistance, and insights into organizational nuances. Pairing new hires with experienced employees for guidance and support accelerates their acclimation process. This mentorship ensures they quickly feel part of the team and can start contributing sooner, with the confidence that they have a go-to resource for any questions or challenges.

Create Strong Communication Channels

Once you begin training, check in with your new employees several times a week during their first few weeks. This ensures that they’re making the desired progress and allows for quick rerouting if an employee gets off track. Be sure to schedule these check-ins at scheduled times so both you and the new employee can plan and be prepared.

Employees stay when they feel heard.

Consider:

- Regular one-on-one check-ins
- Anonymous feedback opportunities
- Acting on suggestions when possible

Continuous, constructive feedback helps new employees adjust and improve their real-time performance. This fosters a culture of open communication and continuous improvement, where individuals always learn and grow, benefiting their teams with enhanced skills and competencies. When staff see their ideas influencing decisions, their commitment grows.

Ensure Supportive Leadership

Managers are one of the top factors in employee retention.

Strong leaders:

- Listen without judgment
- Provide clear expectations
- Offer help when challenges arise
- Advocate for their team

Support Work–Life Balance

Burnout is one of the biggest reasons employees leave.

Helpful practices include:

- Flexible scheduling when possible
- Respecting time off
- Encouraging breaks and realistic workloads

Provide Growth Opportunities

Employees stay longer when they can see a **future** where they are.

Ways to support growth:

- Offer professional development or training pathways – such as the ECP Career Paths
- Provide mentorship or coaching opportunities
- Encourage staff to pursue certifications or leadership roles

Focus on continuous training

In your new hire training program, emphasize that as human beings, we're never done learning. Even when employees successfully complete their new employee training, they will continue to learn new skills, competencies, and behaviors. Encourage reflection and goals.

Retention isn't just about keeping people—it's about creating a workplace people don't want to leave!

How to create a professional development friendly workplace environment

I hear: But, I have been working with children for years! I don't know why I have to take this training.

However, requirements change, no two groups of children are the same, and there is always room to improve.

Ask: Do staff complete training to check a requirement box, or to reflect on their practice and improvement?

If it is just to meet a requirement, you are missing a valuable opportunity for program growth and to better serve our children, families, and the community.

Here are some of the best ways to increase staff training engagement:

- Model a positive attitude for professional development
- Provide scheduled time and space (free from distraction) to complete training.
- Personalize your training
- Combine various training methods
- Make training part of your company culture
- Stress the purpose for and a positive attitude for professional development.

Give employees time (and space) to train

While employees might be convinced to complete training at home, expecting them to put in extra time on their own tells them that you don't value their personal time (or them). It's a straight line from there to having yet another open position to fill.

Build employee training into your corporate culture by making time for it during the employee's workday.

Make sure that staff have time and space away from distraction of other job duties to complete their trainings. Another thing to consider is the equipment (i.e. laptop, PC, computer, access) they will need for the training. With the switch to mobile devices, sometimes training system technology is unable to keep up and still require the use of a computer. Having access to software like a word processor is recommended as well.

Personalize your training

Figure out what your employees already know or need before mandating redundant training. A [training needs analysis](#) is a valuable tool that can offer this guidance. This is great for staff-group training. Other resources include:

[Montana Early Learning Standards](#)

MELS is a resource for early childhood professionals to help them support the growth and development of young children.

[Knowledge Base](#)

KB is a guide for early care professionals and educators: what you need to know, understand, and be able to implement in practice.

These provide reflective pieces that can help staff and programs as a whole determine which types of training are needed for growth and improvement. **For individual training, have staff create a PD plan based on their goals and professional reflections.

Types of staff training methods

The methods of training staff depend on your program's resources, the complexity of the role, and the different ways people (prefer to) learn. Successful training combines different methods to cement the conveyed information and new knowledge.

There are various training methods that can be beneficial to staff, including:

- **Instructor-led-learning.** In-person or virtual learning, either in 1-on-1 or a classroom setting.
- **E-learning:** Self-paced, on-demand, drip learning, or asynchronous learning.
- **On-the-job training:** This can be learning by doing while getting guidance from a manager or an experienced colleague, for example.
- **[Job shadowing](#):** Here, a new hire can follow a more experienced employee as they perform the tasks and activities the new employee will assume.
- **[Mentoring](#):** In this case, the new hire is assigned to someone who can guide them and provide advice about progressing in their field of interest or a particular role.
- **Workshops and interactive sessions:** Small group discussions or activities where employees can practice skills, ask questions, and engage in real-time problem-solving.
- **Peer learning:** Opportunities for new hires to learn from more experienced colleagues within their team or department. This can include collaborative discussions, knowledge-sharing sessions, or informal Q&A opportunities that allow new employees to benefit from the expertise of seasoned team members.

If and where possible, give staff a couple of options they can choose from. Let them try different training methods (using learning technology and tools), find out what works best for them, and ask them for feedback about your training offering. Also, ensure that staff have access to the training resources and can find them easily.

Remember, not all training has to be part of the 16 hours of required training.

Make training part of your company culture

Build it into monthly meetings or schedules.

I can not stress enough about having a positive attitude regarding professional development trainings. Opinions and attitudes can often be contagious among staff. If staff have a negative view of training, they will more often put it off and not care about it.

In a nutshell, knowing how to get employees excited about training means making time for training that is useful and valued by both your program and staff.

Resources:

- **Professional Development Plan**
- **Professional Development Goals**
- **Staff Training Interest Survey**

Review of supports

CCT

Individual on-line training. You can choose trainings by topic or standards to help meet goals.

ECP

Individual Request for Training Approval

Some professional development opportunities such as national or regional conferences, special events, and other training events may not have been ECP approved prior to the event. Individuals have the option to submit for approval of these events by completing an individual training request form online in their ECP profile using these steps: Hit the "view all my training" button, then click "add training". All requests must be submitted within 3 months of event completion and the training must be at least 1 hour in length. You must upload documentation to your request such as a certificate that includes the following: Your full name, title of training, completion date of the training and training hours completed.

Spark

Offers virtual and live training through their Knowledge Center.

Conclusion

Don't wait! Timeline: Make sure renewal application, staff training, and PR is ready to renew 30 days prior to date. If you prioritize professional development in your program throughout the year, you will find that there will be a lot less last minute stress when renewal time comes around!

Thank you!