



Supporting Providers in Obtaining Their Child Development Associate Credential: Lessons from One Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grantee

The Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships

In March 2015, the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded 275 Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnership and EHS expansion grants. In the years since 2015, Congress has approved additional funding which has resulted in additional partnerships and expansion grants. As of December 2017, the EHS-CC Partnership and Expansion Grants had preliminarily reported partnerships with 1,600+ child care centers and 1,070+ family child care homes. In 2018, Congress approved additional funding (\$115 million) for new partnership and expansion grants.

The EHS-CC Partnership grants support partnerships between EHS programs and local child care centers and family child care providers serving infants and toddlers from families with low incomes. The partnerships support working families by providing expanded access to full-day, full-year child care and comprehensive services to children and families.

A key goal of the Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships is to increase the supply of high-quality early learning environments for infants and toddlers. EHS-CC Partnership grantees are working to grow the infant and toddler child care workforce and expand professional development opportunities for child care teachers across the country. One requirement of the EHS-CC Partnership grants is that teachers at child care center partners must meet standards for minimum qualifications, including acquiring a Child Development Associate (CDA) or comparable credential.¹

Obtaining a CDA in order to meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards can be challenging for staff, whose levels of experience and credentials vary. To facilitate staff learning and help staff obtain their CDA, one EHS-CC Partnership grantee developed a flexible program that addressed some of the challenges staff faced in becoming CDA certified.

The grantee director from Drake University Early Head Start in Des Moines, Iowa, shared her experiences implementing a CDA training program for child care partner staff.

As part of the EHS-CC Partnership, Drake University Early Head Start partnered with six Des Moines child care agencies offering services with eight child care center partners. Drake University partnered with Des Moines Area Community College to develop and provide a 15-month CDA training program to teaching staff at the child care partners. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Iowa covered the tuition costs.²

The director reflected on the ways in which Drake University Early Head Start supported the child care providers in the program. She discussed some strategies to address the real-life challenges staff faced such as being intimidated by coursework, limited opportunities to complete coursework during the work day, and language

¹ Administration for Children and Families. "Head Start Program Performance Standards." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2016. Family child care providers have different credential requirements; please check the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

² T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood IOWA is a scholarship program that provides financial support and resources to those in the early childhood workforce. For more information, please contact: <http://www.iowaaeyc.org/teach.cfm>





barriers. She shared that, from the start, she knew that meeting the CDA requirement would be a challenge. As a result, she began to identify supports and strategies to facilitate the success of the partner staff. She shared four key strategies:

1. Provide a tailored program

The grantee director, who taught the CDA training program courses at Des Moines Area Community College, solicited input from the directors of the partner centers and coaches regarding the specific content on which child care teaching staff may need additional training. She then altered the content of the classes to address those needs. “They communicate back to me from the classroom perspective what topics I may need to dig deeper on,” she noted. “The directors are able to say ‘Could you dig deeper on this?’” Using this feedback loop, she worked to create meaningful, relevant content that was individualized to teaching staff’s classroom needs. She also partnered with coaches who work in all of the child care centers. Coaches helped staff apply the information they learned in their CDA coursework in their classrooms.

“Whenever my students graduate from the cohort, I give them a little survival pack for early childhood. One of the things that I give them is a notebook and a pen, because they’re truly rewriting their stories. For some of them completing the course is significant; for others it may not be. But all of them are rewriting a new story for a child too.”

Grantee director from Drake University Early Head Start

2. Provide extra academic supports and encouragement

Some members of the child care partners’ teaching staff, including some staff who struggled to graduate from high school, were intimidated by taking higher education classes. The director noted that offering extra encouragement and support to those particular providers played a key role in their success completing the coursework and obtaining their CDA. For example, the grantee director worked one on one with a teacher at a child care center partner who confided she was intimidated by the prospect of completing the credential. The director offered the teacher extra help to complete her assignments. “I told her, ‘You can do this. Let’s chunk it down,’” The director noted. “We gave her a lot of extra support—more support than she would get in a typical college setting. And you know, when she was completing the course, she wrote a paper all by herself.”

3. Help teachers complete coursework by providing partner staff with necessary equipment and materials

Due to the demands of the work day, teachers have limited time to complete their coursework while at the child care centers. Without access to computers, some found accessing online content or finding time to do their CDA coursework challenging. To maximize staff’s available time and facilitate their access to online content, the grantee director ensured that staff had access to laptops in their classrooms. This ensured that when they did have a break, staff could maximize that time by logging on and working through their coursework.





4. Provide CDA training and supports in multiple languages

Some of the teaching staff at the child care partners were not native English speakers. One of the child care partner programs, the Hispanic Early Resource Center, hired predominantly Hispanic staff to offer a dual language program to children and families. To

address language barriers in the CDA course, the grantee hired an interpreter to attend and translate classes. The interpreter was also present for the exams so that she could translate the material into Spanish. The director credits offering CDA coursework in Spanish as critical to the success of the individuals in the program.

Implementation Stories. This brief is one in a series that highlights the ways in which specific grantees implement EHS-CC Partnerships. By highlighting the work of partnership programs through the voices of grantees, child care partners, T/TA staff, and families, the briefs aim to share stories of implementation with others in the field.

For more information, please contact Drake University EHS at (515) 271-1854; or <https://www.drakeheadstart.org/about-drake-university-head-start/early-head-start/>

Photos courtesy of the Partnership Center.



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