

Coaching Competencies

for Utah's
Early Childhood Education



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Introduction

In February 2013, Utah received a technical assistance grant from the Build project at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to support the development of an early childhood technical assistance system. Stakeholders from many areas of the early childhood field worked on initiatives to support this system, including the development of coaching competencies. The Colorado Coaching Competencies (http://cocoaches.net/uploads/Coaching_competencies_Oct_2010.pdf) were used as a base, and we recognize the Colorado Coaching Consortium for their incredible work.

Those providing technical assistance in the early childhood field have many titles including coach, mentor or consultant. For the purposes of Coaching Competencies we used the term **coaching** as defined by NAEYC Adult Education Glossary (2011). The stakeholders came to this conclusion because most

technical assistance providers engaged in, “a relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized adult-learning knowledge and skills. Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal setting and achievement for an individual or group.”

There are many terms used for the individual receiving the coaching. We have chosen to use the term **adult learner** because it encompasses all of the terms used by various stakeholders including parent, provider and mentee.

Early childhood education coaching competencies can be a useful resource to support coaching work in the following ways:

- Professional development tool for programs and initiatives that employ coaches
- Coaching self-assessment tool to review and strengthen skills and dispositions



- Guide for selection of professionals interested in becoming coaches
- Tool for strengthening professional identity among early childhood educators who are doing coaching
- Tool for promoting coaching as a profession
- Document to inform ongoing conversations regarding coaching in field of early childhood education

There is still a great deal to be learned about the best practices in coaching, and this is intended to be a living document that can change and grow.

There are seven coaching skills areas that contain 13 competencies. Under each competency are indicators of effective practice or explanations of how to achieve competence in each skill area.

What is Coaching?

Coaching is a learning process based on a collaborative relationship that is intentionally designed to promote sustainable growth in the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge to effectively implement the best practices for the development of young children and their families.

Early childhood coaching initiatives in Utah are typically designed to achieve specific outcomes for children, teachers or administrators and programs, with the understanding that there are various ways to achieve these outcomes and that outcomes may be expressed in different ways in different programs.

Coaching is most effective when it is embedded in a broader professional development system that includes opportunities for practitioners to learn about the theoretical foundations of early childhood education, to see effective instructional and leadership strategies demonstrated, to try out new strategies and to receive feedback. Coaching is particularly effective in supporting the reflection required to successfully translate new learning into practices.

Core Values

Underlying themes are woven throughout each section of the competencies and have emerged as core values:

- Coaching is meant to be responsive to the goals and needs of the adult learner in the service of positive outcomes for children and families.
- Coaching requires authentic collaboration; to be effective it must be a partnership.
- Coaching requires respectful, professional regard for the adult learner.
- Coaching is not static; being in a learning relationship is a dynamic process.
- Coaching goes beyond the surface of quality practice to explore the roots of what supports child growth and development.
- Coaching relies on being open to possibilities and welcoming the unexpected.
- Coaching promotes self-reflection and experimentation as primary learning strategies.
- Coaching is a parallel process. The coach practices and models behaviors and dispositions that support adult learning.
- Coaching should assist adult learners to develop self-awareness, self-reflection and self-directed action to benefit the children and families being served.

Competencies



Skill One: *Setting the Foundation*

Meets ethical guidelines and professional standards—knows, understands and has the ability to apply the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, the Code of Ethical Conduct Supplement for Early Childhood Adult Educators, and the International Coach Federation (ICF) Standards of Ethical Conduct during coaching interactions.

Coaches may have to make difficult decisions that have moral and ethical implications while coaching early childhood professionals. The importance of a code of ethics is to provide guidance when there are ethical problems in areas of power and status, multiplicity of clients, ambiguity of data or role ambiguity (Katz, 1978).

The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct (Revised 2005) and the Code of Ethical Conduct: Supplement for Early Childhood Educators serve as resources to assist coaches in resolving ethical dilemmas. The standards of ethical behavior are based on commitment to core values, appreciation of childhood as unique, grounding one's work on current knowledge of child development and learning, appreciation of child and family bonds

and understanding the child within the context of the family. The supplement outlines ethical responsibilities to adult learners. It refers specifically to those involved in **mentoring**, and states that everything we do in our role as educators of adults is intended to further the commitment to the healthy development and welfare of young children.

These documents can be found online at:

<http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/PSETH05.asp>

<http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/ethics04.asp>

The ICF Code of Ethics provides specific guidelines on professional conduct with adult learners. This document includes a philosophy statement and standards of ethical conduct for coaches working in a variety of contexts. Many of these standards are applicable to coaching in early childhood education settings and can be found on page 10 (Appendix I).

In combination, these three documents can provide guidance to coaches on standards of professionalism and support for decision-making in specific early childhood coaching situations.

Establishes the coaching agreement—Understands and explicitly aligns requirements of the specific coaching initiative with the needs and expectations of the adult learner.

- Effectively explains the goals and parameters of the coaching initiative in which the coach and adult learner are partnering. These may include time commitment, logistics, expected outcomes, measures of success, reporting requirements, resources available, confidentiality or roles of other parties (e.g. funders, project coordinators and evaluators).
- Sets mutually defined goals and coaching agendas that align those of the adult learner, the setting in which the adult learner works, the coaching initiative, and the coach.
- Reaches agreement about roles and responsibilities of the coach and the adult learner, and expectations for coaching interactions (e.g. norms related to missed appointments, giving and receiving feedback and follow-through on tasks).
- Assists if the adult learner is participating in more than one coaching initiative.
- Determines whether there is an effective match between his or her coaching method or skills and the needs of the prospective adult learner.



Skill Two: *Co-creating the Relationship*

Establishes trust with the adult learner—Creates a safe, supportive environment that produces ongoing mutual respect and trust.

- Recognizes that the success of the coaching partnership relies on the adult learner's ability to know that the coach will take responsibility, live up to expectations, do the right thing in any situation, and respect their judgment

Establishes a coaching presence —Establishes a professional relationship with the adult, employing a style that is open, flexible and confident.

- Demonstrates respect for and interest in the adult learner's individual strengths, learning style, goals, and cultural context.
- Uses language that is non-discriminatory
- Uses teaching tools that match the adult learner learning style (e.g. metaphor, concrete examples, charts and other visuals)
- Demonstrates appreciation for the adult learner's perspective
- Recognizes the importance of the adult learner's self-discovery
- Establishes and maintains clear agreements
- Maintains professional boundaries
- Maintains professionalism by being on time, organized and prepared for each coaching session
- Models openness to learning and taking risks
- Provides ongoing support for new behaviors and actions, focusing on learning opportunities even when outcomes are disappointing
- Celebrates the adult learner's successes and capabilities for future growth
- Is fully attentive, shifting perspectives and coaching approaches as needed in the moment
- Uses humor and plays effectively to create lightness and energy

Skill Three: *Communicating Effectively*

Uses active listening—Focuses completely on what the adult learner is communicating to understand their intent and support self-expression.

- Encourages, explores and accepts without judgment the adult learner's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs or suggestions.
- Distinguishes between the adult learner words, tone of voice and body language to understand what is actually being communicated
- Summarizes, paraphrases and restates to reflect back what the adult learner has said, for clarity and understanding
- Makes the adult learner's communication a focal point of the interaction by integrating and building on their perspective

Uses powerful questioning—Asks open-ended questions that provide information and stimulate thinking in support of goals.

Ask questions that:

- Elicit the adult learner's perspective
- Facilitate vision and create challenge
- Create greater clarity
- Promote self-reflection

Uses direct communication—Communicates effectively during coaching sessions and uses language that has a positive impact on the adult learner.

- Is clear, articulate and direct in communicating coaching objectives, providing feedback and making recommendations
- Uses re-framing to give the adult learner another perspective on their wants or concerns
- Develops communication pathways that specify how information will be shared with others (i.e. administrators, teachers, families and funders)

Skill Four: *Facilitating Learning and Results*

Creates awareness—Accurately evaluates multiple sources of information in order to help the adult learner gain insight.

- Supports the adult learner to evaluate the alignment of values, goals and actions
- Identifies the thoughts and feelings behind the adult learner's underlying concerns
- Assists the adult learner to identify strengths and areas for learning and growth
- Communicates insights and broader perspectives to help the adult learner see different, interrelated factors that affect them
- Encourages the adult learner to discover alternative viewpoints and find new possibilities for action

Plans and helps set goals—Develops and maintains a strength-based, effective coaching plan with the adult learner.

- Consolidates information to establish a coaching plan which addresses areas of improvement
- Supports the adult learner in prioritizing goals
- Creates an implementation plan with goals that are attainable, measurable and specific with target dates
- Targets early successes that are important to the adult learner
- Supports ongoing reflection to assess progress and determine whether adjustments to the plan are necessary
- Helps the adult learner identify and access a variety of resources needed to achieve goals

Manages progress—Maintains a focus on priorities while reinforcing the adult learner responsibility for action and progress.

- Identifies actions that will lead to progress on goals
- Checks in periodically to follow up on needs and progress
- Supports the adult learner in self-reflection on progress that has occurred since previous coaching session(s)
- Assists the adult learner in re-evaluating goals as needed
- Identifies barriers in partnership with the adult learner
- Explores alternative ideas and options if barriers are identified
- Follows through on commitments

Skill Five: *Assesing the Success of the Coaching Partnership*

Assessing coaching practice—Engages in continual self-reflection of their professional practices and how their practices influence the adult learner performance and outcomes.

- Uses a self-evaluation tool such as the Coaching Self-Evaluation Checklist (see Appendix II)
- Uses a tool that allows the adult learner to give feedback regarding satisfaction with the coaching partnership

Assessing adult learner outcomes—Utilizes measurable criteria for success, in partnership with the adult learner, in the following areas:

- Expansion of the adult learner's ability to self-reflect, self-analyze and self-modify
- Shift in the adult learner's dispositions (i.e. beliefs, attitudes or thinking) in relation to their individual practices
- Increase in the adult learner's skills and knowledge
- Increase in the adult learner's application of skills and knowledge in relation to their individual and program goals



Appendices



Appendix I

The International Coach Federation Code of Ethics

Note: This is not the full text of the ICF Code of Ethics. This is an excerpt of two sections that are most relevant to coaching initiatives in early childhood education.

To view the complete document, go to <http://www.coachfederation.org>

Part One: *The ICF Philosophy of Coaching*

The International Coach Federation (ICF) adheres to a form of coaching that honors the client as the expert in his or her life and work and believes that every client is creative, resourceful and whole. Standing on this foundation, it is the coach's responsibility to:

- Discover, clarify and align with what the client wants to achieve
- Encourage client self-discovery
- Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
- Hold the client responsible and accountable

Part Two: *The ICF Standards of Ethical Conduct*

Professional Conduct at Large

1. I will conduct myself in a manner that reflects positively upon the coaching profession and I will refrain from engaging in conduct or making statements that may negatively impact the public's understanding or acceptance of coaching as a profession.
2. I will not knowingly make any public statements that are untrue or misleading, or make false claims in any written documents relating to the coaching profession.
3. I will respect different approaches to coaching. I will honor the efforts and contributions of others and not misrepresent them as my own.
4. I will be aware of any issues that may potentially lead to the misuse of my influence by recognizing the nature of coaching and the way in which it may affect the lives of others.
5. I will at all times strive to recognize personal issues that may impair, conflict or interfere with my coaching performance or my professional relationships. Whenever the facts and circumstances necessitate, I will promptly seek professional assistance and determine the action to be taken, including whether it is appropriate to suspend or terminate my coaching relationship(s).
6. I will accurately create, maintain, store and dispose of any records of work done in relation to the practice of coaching in a way that promotes confidentiality and complies with any applicable laws.

Professional Conduct with Clients

1. I will be responsible for setting clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern any physical contact that I may have with my clients.

2. I will not become sexually involved with any of my clients.
3. I will construct clear agreements with my clients, and will honor all agreements made in the context of professional coaching relationships.
4. I will ensure that, prior to or at the initial session, my coaching client understands the nature of coaching, the bounds of confidentiality, financial arrangements and other terms of the coaching agreement.
5. I will accurately identify my qualifications, expertise and experience as a coach.
6. I will not intentionally mislead or make false claims about what my client will receive from the coaching process or from me as their coach.
7. I will not give my clients or prospective client's information or advice I know or believe to be misleading.
8. I will not knowingly exploit any aspect of the coach-client relationship for my personal, professional or monetary advantage or benefit.
9. I will respect the client's right to terminate coaching at any point during the process. I will be alert to indications that the client is no longer benefiting from our coaching relationship.
10. If I believe the client would be better served by another coach, or by another resource, I will encourage the client to make a change.
11. I will suggest that my clients seek the services of other professionals when deemed appropriate or necessary.
12. I will take all reasonable steps to notify the appropriate authorities in the event a client discloses an intention to endanger self or others.

Confidentiality/Privacy

1. I will respect the confidentiality of my clients' information, except as otherwise authorized by my client or as required by law.
2. I will obtain agreement from my clients before releasing their names as clients or references or any other client identifying information.
3. I will obtain agreement from the person being coached before releasing information to another person compensating me.
4. NOTE: Guidelines for sharing information may be established by particular coaching initiatives. These guidelines should be clearly communicated to adult learner as part of the coaching agreement.
5. Conflicts of Interest
6. I will seek to avoid conflicts between my interests and the interests of my clients.
7. Whenever any actual conflict of interest or the potential for a conflict of interest arises, I will openly disclose it and fully discuss with my client how to deal with it in whatever way best serves my client.
8. I will disclose to my client all anticipated compensation from third parties that I may receive for referral of that client.

Appendix II

Self-Evaluation Checklist

Please complete this checklist by determining how frequently you demonstrate each competency in your work and indicate for which ones you might seek additional professional development. The last column is for any comments you might wish to add.

Skill One: <i>Setting the Foundation</i>					
Competency Indicators	Consistently	Occasionally	Seldom	Target for Training Yes/No	Observations and Experience
Meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards —Knows, understands and has the ability to apply the following during coaching interactions:					
NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct					
The Code of Ethical Conduct Supplement for Early Childhood Adult Educators					
The International Coach Federation (ICF) Standards of Ethical Conduct					
Establishing the coaching agreement —Understand and explicitly aligns requirements of the specific coaching initiative with the needs and expectations of the adult learner.					
Effectively explains the goals and parameters of the coaching initiative in which the coach and adult learner are partnering. These may include time commitment, logistics, expected outcomes, measures of success, reporting requirements, resources available, confidentiality, roles of other parties (e.g. funders, project coordinators and evaluators).					
Sets mutually defined goals and coaching agendas that align those of the adult learner, the setting in which the adult learner works, the coaching initiative, and the coach.					
Reaches agreement about roles and responsibilities of the coach and the adult learner, and expectations for coaching interactions (e.g. norms related to missed appointments, giving and receiving feedback and follow-through on tasks).					
Assists if the adult learner is participating in more than one coaching initiative.					

Appendix II

Self Evaluation Checklist

Determines whether there is an effective match between his or her coaching method or skills and the needs of the prospective adult learner.					
Skill Two: Co-creating the Relationship					
Competency Indicators	Consistently	Occasionally	Seldom	Target for Training Yes/No	Observations and Experience
Establishes trust with the adult learner —Creates a safe, supportive environment that produces ongoing mutual respect and trust.					
Recognizes that the success of the coaching partnership relies on the adult learner's ability to know that the coach will take responsibility, live up to expectations, do the right thing in any situation and respect their judgment					
Establishes a coaching presence —Establishes a professional relationship with the adult learner, employing a style that is open, flexible and confident.					
Demonstrates respect for and interest in the adult learner's individual strengths, learning style, goals and cultural context. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses language that is non-discriminatory • Uses teaching tools that match the adult learner learning style (i.e. metaphor, concrete examples, charts and other visuals) 					
Demonstrates appreciation for the adult learner's perspective.					
Recognizes the importance of the adult learner's self-discovery.					
Establishes and maintains clear agreements.					
Maintains professional boundaries.					
Maintains professionalism by being on time, organized and prepared for each coaching session.					
Models openness to learning and taking risks.					

Appendix II

Self Evaluation Checklist

Provides ongoing support for new behaviors and actions, focusing on learning opportunities even when outcomes are disappointing.					
Celebrates the adult learner's successes and capabilities for future growth.					
Is fully attentive, shifting perspectives and coaching approaches as needed in the moment.					
Uses humor and play effectively to create lightness and energy.					
Skill Three: <i>Communicating Effectively</i>					
Competency Indicators	Consistently	Occasionally	Seldom	Target for Training Yes/No	Observations and Experience
Uses active listening —Focuses completely on what the adult learner is communicating to understand their intent and support self-expression.					
Encourages, explores and accepts without judgment the adult learner's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs or suggestions.					
Distinguishes between the adult learner words, tone of voice, and body language to understand what is actually being communicated					
Summarizes, paraphrases and restates to reflect back what the adult learner has said, for clarity and understanding.					
Makes the adult learner's communication a focal point of the interaction by integrating and building on their perspective.					
Uses powerful questioning —Asks open-ended questions that provide information and stimulate thinking in support of the adult learner learning and goals.					
Asks questions that elicit the adult learner's perspective.					

Appendix II

Self Evaluation Checklist

Asks questions that facilitate vision and create challenge.					
Asks questions that create greater clarity.					
Asks questions that promote self-reflection.					
Uses direct communication —Communicates effectively during coaching sessions and uses language that has a positive impact on the adult learner.					
Is clear, articulate and direct in communicating coaching objectives, providing feedback and making recommendations.					
Uses re-framing to give the adult learner another perspective on their wants or concerns.					
Skill Four: <i>Facilitating Learning and Results</i>					
Competency Indicators	Consistently	Occasionally	Seldom	Target for Training Yes/No	Observations and Experience
Creates awareness —Accurately evaluates multiple sources of information in order to help the adult learner gain insight.					
Supports the adult learner to evaluate the alignment of values, goals and actions.					
Identifies the thoughts and feelings behind the adult learner's underlying concerns.					
Assists the adult learner to identify strengths and areas that need growth.					
Communicates insights and broader perspectives to help the adult learner see different, interrelated factors that affect them.					
Encourages the adult learner to discover alternative viewpoints and find new possibilities for action.					

Appendix II

Self Evaluation Checklist

Plans and helps set goals —Develops and maintains a strength-based, effective coaching plan with the adult learner.					
Consolidates information to establish a coaching plan which addresses areas of improvement.					
Supports the adult learner in prioritizing goals.					
Creates an implementation plan with goals that are attainable, measurable, specific and have target dates.					
Targets early successes that are important to the adult learner.					
Supports ongoing reflection to assess progress and determine whether adjustments to the plan are necessary.					
Helps the adult learner identify and access a variety of resources needed to achieve goals.					
Manages progress —Maintains a focus on priorities while reinforcing the adult learner responsibility for action and progress.					
Identifies actions that will lead to progress on goals.					
Checks in periodically to follow up on needs and progress.					
Supports the adult learner in self-reflection on progress that has occurred since previous coaching session(s).					
Assists the adult learner in re-evaluating goals as needed.					
Identifies barriers in partnership with the adult learner.					
Explores alternative ideas and options if barriers are identified.					
Follows through on commitments.					

Appendix II

Self Evaluation Checklist

Skill Five: <i>Facilitating Learning and Results</i>					
Competency Indicators	Consistently	Occasionally	Seldom	Target for Training Yes/ No	Observations and Experience
Assessing coaching practice —engages in continual self-reflection of their professional practices and how their practices influence the adult learner performance and outcomes.					
Uses a self-evaluation tool such as the this self-evaluation checklist.					
Uses a tool that allows the adult learner to give feedback regarding satisfaction with the coaching partnership.					
Assessing adult learner outcomes —utilizes measurable criteria for success, in partnership with adult learner, in the following areas:					
Expansion of the adult learner's ability to self-reflect, self-analyze and self-modify.					
Shift in the adult learner's dispositions (i.e. beliefs, attitudes or thinking) in relation to their individual practices.					
Increase in the adult learner's skills and knowledge.					
Increase in the adult learner's application of skills and knowledge in relation to their individual and program goals.					

Coaching Credentials



The Utah Coaching Credentials Stakeholders

Carolyn Christensen	Professional Development Specialist	Office of Child Care	carolynchristensen@utah.gov
Katie Ricord	Head Start Collaboration Director	Office of Childcare	kricord@utah.org
Stephen Matherly	Program Specialist—QRIS	Office of Child Care	smaher@utah.gov
Alda Jones	Training and Consultant Director	The Children's Center	ajones@tccslc.org
Geri Mendoza	Director, ECE Lab School	University of Utah	geri.mendoza@fcs.utah.gov
Janis Dubno	Senior Policy Analyst	Voices of Utah Children	janis@utahchildren.org
Colleen Murphy	Cordniator of the Early childhood Systems grant	Bureau of Child Development	cmurphy@utah.gov
Brenda Van Gorder	Early Childhood Specialist	Granite School District	bvangorder@graniteschools.org
Sheila Anderson	University Professor and UAEYC	UAEYC	sheila.anderson@aggiemail.usu.edu
Carrie Ota	University Professor	Weber State University	carrieota@weber.edu
Moira Rampton	Home Visiting Coordinator	Guadalupe Center	moria@guadalupe.k12.ut.us
Linda Smith	State Infant Toddler Specialist and UAEYC President	Kids On The Move	lsmith@kotm.org
Anneli Segura	Executive Director of Utah Afterschool Network	UAN	annelis@utahafterschool.orfx
Patty Mazzoni	Education Director at SLCAP Head Start	SLCAP Head Start	pmazzoni@slcap.org
Sarah Piercy	Mentor/Coach SLCAP Head Start	SLCAP Head Start	spiercy@slcap.org
Catherine Hoelscher	Health Program Coordinator	Baby Watch Early Intervention	choelscher@utah.gov
Janet Wade	Director of Services—Northern Rocky Moutain	Easter Seals Goodmill	janetw@esgw.org



Utah Office of Child Care

A Division of the Utah Department of
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