

E3: Infant and Toddler Workforce Competencies: Frameworks and Professional Development Supports across Care Settings

Thursday, April 18, 2019

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. | Burnham

1. Descriptive Information

E3: Infant and Toddler Workforce Competencies: Frameworks and Professional Development Supports across Care Settings

The purpose of this session is twofold: (1) to provide an overview of the early care and education (ECE) workforce competencies articulated for those caring for infants and toddlers across ECE settings, and (2) to consider how competency frameworks for the ECE workforce are implemented within states. The first presentation will discuss an OPRE-funded scan of state and national frameworks for infant/toddler teacher competencies. The second presentation will focus on work being conducted by the Collaborative for the Understanding of the Pedagogy of Infant/Toddler Development (CUPID) to articulate and document competencies demonstrated by students completing university coursework towards an infant/toddler ECE degree. Finally, a representative from the State Capacity Building Center Infant/Toddler Specialist Network will share how ECE competency frameworks developed for pre-service and/or in-service align with efforts within state institutes of higher education, state credentials, or PD initiatives. The facilitator will demonstrate how, together, these presentations provide a context for further consideration of professional development supports – both pre-service and in-service – for the infant/toddler workforce to develop competencies and improve ECE quality. Time will be available for questions and discussion with the presenters.

Facilitator

Tamara Halle, Child Trends

Presenters

Pia Caronongan, Mathematica Policy Research | *Existing Competency Frameworks for Infant/Toddler Teachers and Caregivers*

Julie Torquati, University of Nebraska-Lincoln | *Defining Domains of Competency for the Infant/Toddler Workforce*

Kelley Perkins, State Capacity Building Center Infant/Toddler Specialist Network (ITSN) | *Implementation in Action: Examples of States Utilizing Competency Frameworks for the Infant/Toddler Workforce*

Scribe

Gabi Kirsch, ICF

2. Documents Available on Website

- [Infant and Toddler Workforce Competencies](#)

3. Brief Summary of Presentations

- Tamara Halle, Child Trends
- Pia Caronongan, Mathematica Policy Research | *Existing Competency Frameworks for Infant/Toddler Teachers and Caregivers*
 - The first three years of a child's life is a distinct developmental period. Children are sensitive to their environment and rely on their interactions with adults. Little information is known on the knowledge, skills, and other attributes (competencies) required to care for infants and toddlers (I/T). Identifying these could be used to inform pre-service and in-service training, credentialing, etc.
 - Mathematica is conducting a scan of existing competency frameworks. They have conducted a literature review of associations between competencies and outcomes. They came up with working definitions of competency (within which are knowledge, skill, and attributes). They also defined a "competency framework:" a compilation of competencies that conveys the range of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for a profession.
 - Pia will focus on the scan for today. They conducted an internet search and found 58 relevant frameworks relevant to infant and toddler teachers and caregivers working in centers and family child

care homes. Most were developed by state agencies or organizations. The target audiences for the frameworks differed. Twenty-nine focused broadly on children from birth to age 5. Fifteen frameworks included 1 or 2 infant and toddler competencies. Those related to safe feeding practices and sleeping, etc.

- Fourteen frameworks included 3 or more infant- and toddler-specific competencies (including frameworks that targeted exclusively infant and toddler caregivers). All 14 frameworks included knowledge and skill-based competencies. Attribute-based competencies were included in 11 of the 14 competencies.
- Frameworks organize and refer to competencies in different ways. Researchers developed a list of domains to code content of competencies. There are slight differences in the prevalence of some domains than others, but the majority of the frameworks cover a wide range of domains. Family communication and engagement, SEL development, and instructional planning and assessment (progress monitoring) are the top three and were covered in all 14 of the frameworks.
- Mathematica will design a study to understand how the competencies are used and assessed on the ground.

- **Julie Torquati**, University of Nebraska-Lincoln | *Defining Domains of Competency for the Infant/Toddler Workforce*

- Julie presented on Collaborative for Understanding the Pedagogy of Infant & Toddler Development (CUPID). Fifty researchers from 25 universities are a part of this collaborative. The goals are to improve practice in infant/toddler care and education, study and improve our own teaching, and strengthen university curricula.
- Scholars nominated competencies based on research literature. They categorized and organized competencies. They gathered additional input from practitioners and scholars. They aligned with other competencies and adjusted.
- They have CUPID competency domains: (1) reflective practice, (2) building and supporting relationships, (3) supporting development and learning, (4) guiding I/T behavior, (5) partnering with and supporting diverse families, (6) assessing behavior, development, and environments, (7) including I/T with special needs and their families, (8) mentoring, leadership and supporting competencies in adults, and (9) professionalism.
- They think of how these competencies differ by roles, group care, and home visiting.
- An attendee asked about implementation. The team does not have funding for this project. They are all just doing the work voluntarily. As the consortium, they are not working with community colleges.

- **Kelley Perkins**, State Capacity Building Center Infant/Toddler Specialist Network (ITSN) | *Implementation in Action: Examples of States Utilizing Competency Frameworks for the Infant/Toddler Workforce*

- Kelley discussed the state capacity building center's I/T specialist network. There are ten locations throughout the United States. Since the organization's inception in 2016, they have tracked issues relating to Infant and Toddlers.
- Kelley shared information about states that have used or are beginning to use competencies towards a state I/T credential. For example, New Jersey have just rolled out the third addition of their competencies. They tried to ensure that they were aligning this to other initiatives in the state and national guidelines. They have thought of these credentials in the content of career pathways. New Jersey still has some gaps; they are unsure that this is being implemented the way that the theory helps. Kelley suggests an implementation study.
- South Carolina and Ohio have a field guide which uses competencies to show what they want I/T specialists to focus on. Some states have been talking about how mentorship and coaching can help I/T specialists gain competencies.
- Kelley has more information about credentials. An attendee asked her to speak more about field guides. This was formed from the early learning guidelines and starting to do the I/T coaching. It's geared towards I/T specialists.

- The credentials are state defined and outside of academic institutions. There are only three states with certificates linked to competencies for I/T specialists.

4. Brief Summary of Discussion

- An attendee asked how the competencies are used to shape higher education coursework. Does Julie see a move in coursework to be more competency and practice oriented? In Julie's surveys, they are examining if students are currently in a practicum. If so, how many hours a week (same questions for observations)? This framework has been helping to focus on I/T since the competencies are not always focused on I/T.
- Reflective practice is the backdrop for competencies. Students must reflect on their own understanding of children's emotions (and their own emotions). This is not content you can learn in a class, but Julie's team can create experiences that can facilitate these experiences. The mentoring and coaching Julie sees as something post-baccalaureate to work with learned experiences working with I/T. Professionalism is a maturing process that happens with time within the field.
- An attendee commented that higher education needs to be infused with these ideas.
- Given that you have this unifying buy-in to this framework, CUPID, across multiple states, universities, and professors, is there a way to develop a tool that is a more universal curriculum?
- The reflection piece of this is important. You may see a child crying as a manipulative behavior. If you are able to take a step back and reflect, you are able to create boundaries and deconstruct those narratives. Moving towards more of a universal coursework, Julie's team is testing pieces of this. She is interested in partnering and supporting families. She has her students do home visits and provide them with open ended questions. No students want to do it, but they see it as transformational once they do home visits. Developing comfort and rapport with greeting parents is important.
- Pia's next study will focus on implementation and will be more qualitative in nature. How are you doing this? She will be talking to multiple stakeholders at an organization.
- What cultural perspectives are the presenters taking into consideration? For example, are you working with tribal communities as well? Julie commented that they are working on developing relationships with a tribe. It's a long-term investment. In Pia's scan, she relied on existing documents of the framework. She doesn't recall coming across frameworks that spoke about working with tribal communities. An attendee said that these frameworks need to explicitly highlight cultural sensitivities.

5. Summary of Key Issues Raised

- Little information is known on the knowledge, skills, and other attributes (competencies) required to care for infants and toddlers (I/T). Identifying these could be used to inform pre-service and in-service training, credentialing, etc.
- CUPID competency domains: (1) reflective practice, (2) building and supporting relationships, (3) supporting development and learning, (4) guiding I/T behavior, (5) partnering with and supporting diverse families, (6) assessing behavior, development, and environments, (7) including I/T with special needs and their families, (8) mentoring, leadership and supporting competencies in adults, and (9) professionalism.
- Reflective practice is the backdrop for competencies. Students must reflect on their own understanding of children's emotions (and their own emotions).