

COLORADO EARLY CHILDHOOD COACHING COMPETENCIES



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INTRODUCTION

Why and how the competencies were developed

In the Spring of 2007, representatives from various early childhood education coaching initiatives in Colorado began meeting monthly with a goal of gaining a better understanding of the scope and nature of early childhood coaching projects around the state. In addition, the group wanted to explore how a common set of principles or standards for coaching and more systematic professional development opportunities for coaches might support the work and promote stronger outcomes for coaching efforts. The group adopted the name Colorado Coaching Consortium.

A survey of coaching initiatives statewide showed that a significant amount of coaching was being done, with common broad goals but great variability in practice. The Consortium determined that a set of shared standards, in the form of coaching competencies, could be helpful in guiding coaching work around the state. In a day-long work session in December 2007, a group of 34 coaches, program supervisors, and other representatives of diverse coaching initiatives joined with Consortium members to begin crafting a definition of coaching and a set of coaching competencies for the early childhood field in Colorado. Using business and life coaching competencies developed by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) as a springboard, this work group completed an in-depth analysis of the skills and dispositions required for effective professional development coaching with early childhood educators seeking to provide high quality services to children and families. Consortium members then took the results of this day's work and synthesized them into Colorado's original coaching competencies published in 2009.

The Consortium believed that these Early Childhood Coaching Competencies could be a useful resource to support coaching work in the following ways:

- As a professional development tool for programs and initiatives that employ coaches
- As a coach self-assessment tool to review and strengthen skills and dispositions
- As a tool for promoting coaching as a profession
- To inform ongoing conversation on the role of coaching
- To support coaching efforts in Colorado

Recently, the ICF engaged in a rigorous, 24-month coaching practice analysis of their Coaching Core Competency Model. *"This large-scale research initiative validated that much of the existing International Coaching Federation Core Competency Model, developed nearly 25 years ago, remains critically important to the practice of coaching today. Some new elements and themes that emerged from the data have also been integrated into the model. These include a paramount emphasis on ethical behavior and confidentiality, the importance of a coaching mindset and ongoing reflective practice, the critical distinctions between various levels of coaching agreements, the criticality of partnership between coaching partners, and the importance of cultural, systemic and contextual awareness. These foundational components, combined with emerging themes, reflect the key elements of coaching practice today and will serve as stronger, more comprehensive coaching standards for the future."* -- ICF

Upon analytic review of the ICF's updated Core Competencies, the Colorado Coaching Consortium's Steering Committee readily adopted these as Colorado's revised Early Childhood Coaching Competencies with minor adaptation and permission from the ICF. The ICF updated Core Competencies can be accessed at <https://coachfederation.org/core-competencies>.

The Colorado Early Childhood Coaching Competencies were adapted for early childhood from the International Coaching Federation (ICF) updated Core Competencies (2019), with permission from the ICF. www.coachfederation.org. The ICF updated Core Competencies can be accessed at <https://coachfederation.org/core-competencies>.

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Colorado Coaching Consortium's Core Values

Some underlying themes are woven throughout each section of the competencies that have emerged as core values and beliefs. While coaching is viewed as a relationship between “co-learners”, we believe that the coach’s primary role is to be responsive to the goals and needs of the adult being coached, in the service of positive outcomes for children and families. These themes include:

- Coaching requires authentic collaboration; to be effective it must be a partnership.
- Coaching is a dynamic process that goes beyond the surface of quality practice.
- Coaching relies on being open to possibilities and welcoming the unexpected.
- Coaching promotes self-awareness, self-reflection, experimentation, and self-directed action as primary learning strategies.
- Coaching requires respectful, professional regard between adults; it is a parallel process implemented in all interactions.
- Coaching honors the culture, diversity, inclusion, and equity of each individual.
- Coaching is embedded in a broader professional development system that includes opportunities for adults to learn about the theoretical foundations of early childhood education, and supports the reflection required to successfully translate learning into practice.

Colorado Coaching Consortium's Definition of Coaching

Coaching is a co-learning process based on a collaborative relationship that is intentionally designed to promote sustainable growth in necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge to effectively implement best practices for the development of young children and their families. Coaching facilitates problem-solving processes by supporting reflection, clarifying, and implementing ideas.

A. Setting the Foundation

1. Demonstrates Ethical Practice

Definition: Understands and consistently applies the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct (Updated 2011), NAEYC's Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education (2019), the International Coaching Federation Code of Ethics and the Colorado Coaching Competencies (Revised 2020) based on the International Coaching Federation Core Competency Model (Revised 2019).

1. Demonstrates personal integrity and honesty in interactions
2. Is sensitive to others' identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs
3. Uses appropriate and respectful language
4. Abides by the Codes of Ethics/Ethical Conduct noted above and upholds the Colorado Coaching Consortium's Core Values
5. Maintains confidentiality
6. Maintains the distinctions between coaching, consulting, mentoring, technical assistance, psychotherapy, and other support professions
7. Makes referrals to other support professionals, as appropriate
8. Determines whether there is an effective match between coaching method/skills and the needs of the adult

2. Embodies a Coaching Mindset

Definition: Develops and maintains a mindset that is open, curious, flexible, and learning-centered

1. Acknowledges and accepts that adults are responsible for their own choices
2. Engages in ongoing learning and development as a coach
3. Develops an ongoing reflective practice to enhance one's coaching
4. Remains aware of and open to the influence of context and culture on self and others
5. Uses awareness of self and one's perception to benefit adults
6. Develops and maintains the ability to regulate one's emotions
7. Mentally and emotionally prepares for coaching interactions
8. Seeks support from outside sources when necessary

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B. Co-Creating the Relationship

3. Establishes and Maintains Agreements

Definition: Co-creates clear agreements about the coaching relationship, process, plans and goals. Establishes agreements for the overall coaching engagement as well as those for each coaching interaction.

1. Explains what coaching is and describes the process
2. Reaches agreement about what is appropriate in the relationship, what is offered, and the responsibilities of each stakeholder
3. Reaches agreement about the guidelines and specific parameters of the coaching relationship such as logistics, fees, scheduling, duration, termination, confidentiality, and inclusion of others
4. Co-establishes an overall coaching plan and goals
5. Co-determines adult-coach compatibility
6. Co-identifies, reconfirms, and/or co-defines what is needed to be addressed or resolved to achieve desired outcome
7. Co-identifies, defines, or reconfirms measures of success for desired outcome
8. Co-manages the time and focus of the session
9. Continues coaching in the direction of the desired outcome unless indicated otherwise
10. Co-ends the coaching relationship in a way that honors the experience

4. Cultivates Trust and Safety

Definition: Partners to create a safe, supportive environment that allows each participant to share freely. Maintains a relationship of mutual respect and trust.

1. Seeks to understand each other within their context which may include their identity, environment, experiences, values, and beliefs
2. Demonstrates respect for each other's identity, perceptions, style, and language and adapts as appropriate
3. Acknowledges and respects each other's unique talents, insights, and work in the coaching process
4. Shows support, empathy, and concern
5. Acknowledges and supports expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs, and suggestions
6. Demonstrates openness and transparency to display vulnerability and build trust

5. Maintains Presence

Definition: Is fully conscious and present, employing a style that is open, flexible, grounded and confident

1. Remains focused, observant, empathetic and responsive
2. Demonstrates learning-focused curiosity during the coaching process
3. Maintains awareness of one's own emotions to stay objective and present
4. Demonstrates confidence in working with strong emotions during the coaching interaction
5. Is comfortable working in a space of regularly not knowing
6. Creates or allows space for silence, pause and/or reflection

C. Communicating Effectively

6. Listens Actively

Definition: Focuses on attuning to fully understand what is being communicated and to support self-expression.

1. Considers the context, identity, environment, experiences, values, and beliefs to enhance understanding of what is being communicated
2. Reflects or summarizes what is communicated to ensure clarity and understanding
3. Recognizes and inquires when it is sensed there is more to be communicated
4. Notices, acknowledges, and explores emotions, energy shifts, non-verbal cues or other behaviors
5. Integrates words, tone of voice and body language to determine the full meaning of what is being communicated
6. Notices trends in behaviors and emotions across interactions to discern themes and patterns

7. Evokes Awareness

Definition: Facilitates insight and learning by using tools and techniques such as powerful questioning, silence, metaphor, or analogy.

1. Considers experience when deciding what might be most useful
2. Challenges to evoke awareness or insight
3. Asks questions, such as a way of thinking, values, needs, wants and beliefs
4. Asks questions that support exploration beyond current thinking
5. Invites sharing more about experiences in the moment
6. Notices what is working to enhance progress
7. Adjusts the coaching approach in response to needs
8. Supports identifying factors that influence current and future patterns of behavior, thinking or emotion
9. Invites generation of ideas about how to move forward and what willing or able to do
10. Supports reframing perspectives
11. Shares observations, insights, and feelings, without attachment, that have the potential to create new learning

D. Cultivating Learning and Growth

8. Facilitates Growth

Definition: Partners to transform learning and insight into action. Promotes autonomy throughout the coaching process.

1. Works to integrate new awareness, insight or learning into worldview and behaviors
2. Co-designs goals, actions and accountability measures that integrate and expand new learning
3. Acknowledges and supports autonomy in the design of goals, actions and methods of accountability
4. Co-identifies potential results or learning from identified action steps
5. Invites consideration of how to move forward, including resources, support and potential barriers
6. Co-summarizes learning and insight within or between interactions
7. Celebrates progress and successes