



# CORE COMPETENCIES FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS

*Milwaukee, Wisconsin - 2016  
Adapted with permission from Montgomery County, Maryland*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

## **Introduction**

- About This Guide - **Page 3**
- How The Competencies Can Be Used - **Page 4**
- How the Competencies Were Developed - **Page 5**
- Looking Ahead - **Page 6**

## **At A Glance** - Page 7

## **Guiding Principles** - Page 8

## **The Core Competencies** - Page 9

### Domain I: Youth Development Practitioners as Resources to Youth - **Page 9**

- A. Safety
- B. Health
- C. Program Design
- D. Program Activities

### Domain II: Youth Development Practitioners as Partners with Families - **Page 13**

- A. Family

### Domain III: Youth Development Practitioners as Partners with Schools & Communities - **Page 14**

- A. Schools
- B. Communities

### Domain IV. Youth Development Practitioners as Partners with Colleagues & Organizations - **Page 16**

- A. Professionalism / Professional Development
- B. Sustainability / Advocacy

## **Acknowledgements** - Page 18

## **Appendices** - Page 19

- A. Code of Ethics for Child and Youth Care - **Page 19**
- B. Equity Manifesto - **Page 21**
- C. Self-Assessment Tool - **Page 22**



## About This Guide

Research has shown that participation in quality out-of-school time programs yields numerous long-term benefits for young people. Such programs can improve academic achievement and produce positive behavior changes. Positive youth outcomes include increased interpersonal skills, problem solving and self-control. Quality programs have also been shown to reduce risk behavior, such as drug and alcohol use, school misbehavior, violence, truancy and high-risk sexual behavior.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

However, these outcomes cannot be achieved unless youth-serving agencies have the organizational and staff capacity to deliver high-quality programming on a consistent basis. A strong body of research indicates that a skilled and stable youth development workforce plays a significant role in program quality, continuity, and youth experiences.<sup>4</sup>

This guide outlines a set of core competencies that can be used to strengthen the youth development workforce. It provides a framework that direct service staff, program managers and supervisors, and administrators of youth-serving agencies can utilize to improve their youth work knowledge, skills, and abilities. The guide also includes a self-assessment tool for youth development practitioners to measure their knowledge and skills in each of the core competency domains.

The competencies were originally developed by Montgomery County, Maryland, in 2013 and adapted by Beyond the Bell Milwaukee in 2016. Going forward, this guide is intended to be a living document that the Milwaukee community can use to build a well-trained youth development workforce and enhance program quality citywide.

<sup>1</sup> Catalano, R. G., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J.A., Lonczack, H. S., Hawkins, J. D. (2004). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 591, 98-144.

<sup>2</sup> Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432.

<sup>3</sup> Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Pachan, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45, 294-309.

<sup>4</sup> Every Hour Counts. (2014). Every Hour Counts measurement framework: How to measure success in expanded learning systems.

<sup>5</sup> Excel Beyond the Bell Montgomery County, Maryland. (2013). Core competencies for youth development practitioners, ii.

## How The Competencies Can Be Used

A **competency** is a set of knowledge, skills, and abilities essential to youth development work.<sup>5</sup>

The following chart indicates how various stakeholder groups may utilize the competencies.

The core competencies can be used to:	Direct Service	Program Supervision & Management Staff	Administration	Youth & Families	Funders & Policy Makers	Trainers	Institutions of Higher Education	Schools and School Districts
Create common language to understand the components of a quality youth program.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identify particular skills and knowledge needed for various positions within a youth-serving agency.	✓	✓	✓				✓	
Create job descriptions and develop staff evaluations based on the core competencies.		✓	✓					
Pinpoint specific areas of needed professional development and training within an organization or program.	✓	✓	✓					
Organize coursework, trainings, evaluations, and professional development offerings to address specific competencies.		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Make informed decisions when selecting an out-of-school time program, and advocate for higher quality programs.				✓				
Coordinate efforts with multiple programs across multiple schools and organizations to increase program quality.		✓	✓					✓
Adjust program design and delivery to incorporate elements of a quality program.	✓	✓	✓					
Link funding to programs striving to achieve higher levels of quality, and dedicate resources for professional development.					✓		✓	✓



### How The Competencies Were Developed

Beyond the Bell is a collaborative of youth-serving agencies, public institutions, funders, policymakers and youth working to ensure that all young people in Milwaukee are engaged in coordinated, high-quality out-of-school time opportunities. Its working groups—Data, Quality, Access, Policy and Funding—explore national best practices, gather input from youth locally, and develop strategies to improve the coordination of youth services in Milwaukee.

The Quality Working Group recognized that the city lacked a common framework, language, or metric that characterized a quality youth program. Working group members also reviewed a framework developed by Every Hour Counts—a national coalition of citywide organizations that increase access to quality learning opportunities—that identifies the ingredients critical to coordinating services for youth.

From this framework the working group identified two components needed in Milwaukee: **adopting youth program quality standards** and **providing coordinated training and technical assistance**. Ultimately, the group envisioned a system where organizations could access relevant trainings aligned to program quality standards that would build staff competencies.

A subcommittee of the working group formed to identify the standards and competencies. Members created a list of criteria for Milwaukee, indicating that competencies would:

- Apply to a variety of youth development organization disciplines (including after school, social services, etc.)
- Include tiers delineating advancing levels of expertise (youth development professional, management professional, administrative professional)
- Have an easy-to-use check list for youth development organizations to gauge adherence to quality practices
- Include an assessment tool for professionals to measure knowledge and/or skills in each category
- Explicitly include cultural competency and diversity as a critical component of program quality

Upon extensive review of existing standards and competencies adopted by six other communities across the country<sup>6</sup>, the subcommittee found none meeting the criteria set for Milwaukee. As a result, the group set out to develop its own guide, building from existing research and adjusting to fit local context and priorities. However, in other communities the task of developing city-specific competencies involved many years of work, large teams of researchers, and various funding sources to complete a quality product. Given current resources and timing, the subcommittee decided to select an existing framework to adopt in Milwaukee.

Given the original criteria, the subcommittee determined that the Core Competencies for Youth Development Practitioners, developed by Excel Beyond the Bell in Montgomery County, Maryland, was the best fit. The subcommittee also decided to add a section on Cultural Competency and Responsiveness and Youth Leadership and Engagement, adopted from School's Out Washington in Washington State, as guiding principles.

<sup>6</sup> The following frameworks were reviewed: Core Competencies for Youth Development Practitioners (2013) Excel Beyond the Bell Montgomery County, MD; National After-school Association Core Knowledge and Competencies for After-school and Youth Development Professionals (2011) National After-school Association; Texas Standards of High Quality After-school, Summer and Expanded Learning Programs (2014) Texas Partnership for Out of School Time; Competencies for Professional Child & Youth Work Practitioners (2010) Association for Child and Youth Care Practice; Performance Profiles Youth Development Professional, Management Professional and Executive Professional (2006, 2015) Boys & Girls Clubs of America; Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals (2010), School's Out Washington.



## Looking Ahead

Beyond the Bell would like to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of the Quality Working Group in developing the priorities and process to adopt core competencies for youth work professionals in Milwaukee. Beyond the Bell plans to test these competencies—and corresponding trainings—with practitioners and leaders locally. Looking ahead, the expectation is that the community will expand and build upon the framework. This will likely involve revisiting and revising it.

Beyond the Bell will take a continuous improvement approach to implementing both the competencies and aligned trainings. As such, the process is not intended to be high stakes or punitive. Rather, Beyond the Bell aims to strengthen the professional development system for youth workers by making relevant adjustments over time. Beyond the Bell is eager to work with youth-serving organizations, funders, policymakers and youth to engage with the competencies and move toward a higher standard of quality in Milwaukee.



## AT A GLANCE

---

Three levels of career progression range from the skills and knowledge of a beginning practitioner to a more advanced professional. Competencies build on one another providing clear expectations for demonstrated skill acquisition and professional growth.

### Four Content Areas

#### 1. Youth Development Practitioners as Resources to Youth

- Communicating and ensuring implementation of health and safety expectations
- Designing and implementing program activities that support program goals and incorporate the needs and interests of program participants

#### 2. Youth Development Practitioners as Partners with Families

- Offering opportunities to engage and support the families of program participants, including nontraditional and extended families

#### 3. Youth Development Practitioners as Partners with Schools and Communities

- Building reciprocal relationships with schools and communities

#### 4. Youth Development Practitioners as Partners with Colleagues and Organizations

- Demonstrating commitment to one's own learning, skill building, and professionalism on the job
- Pursuing resources and policies that support programs and participants

### Three Staffing Levels

Within each content area, competencies are arranged based on three levels of youth development practitioners:

	Direct Service	Program Supervision & Management	Administration
<b>Responsibility Overview</b>	Assist with planning and leading youth program activities	Coordinate and supervise youth and social services programs	Manage operational logistics, problem solve and supervise staff
<b>Job Types</b>	Group Aid, Recreation Worker, Program Assistant	Social and Community Service Manager, Program Coordinator	Youth Program Director, Administrator

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

---

Beyond the Bell has embraced two guiding principles as we work to build high-quality organizations with high-quality staff. These principles cut across all of the domains in this guide, and should inform staff competencies at all levels within an organization.

## **Cultural Competency and Responsiveness**

Guiding Principle: Quality programs respect and are responsive to the diversity of program participants, their families, and community.

- The program provides an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful environment for all children, youth, and families.
- The program creates policies to ensure a safe atmosphere for children and youth to explore their own identity, including cultural beliefs and practices.
- The program provides all staff with ongoing practical tools and training for cultural competency and promoting professional self-awareness about power, privilege, and equity issues that impact youth.
- The program recruits, hires, and develops qualified staff who reflect the diversity and culture(s) of the community served.
- Staff know and understand cultures of participating youth in their programs and are responsive to individual youth needs, recognizing their special interests, feelings, abilities, and cultures.
- Youth are encouraged to express their own cultural identity in the program.
- Youth have intentional opportunities to explore, share, and celebrate each other's heritage and culture in their program.

## **Youth Leadership And Engagement**

Guiding Principle: Quality programs promote a sense of purpose and individual empowerment in youth through opportunities to engage in a rich variety of experiences, participate in planning, and exercise choice and leadership.

- The program encourages and recognizes youth input in activity planning, implementation, and evaluation at a level that is appropriate.
- The program supports youth to develop skills in decision-making, planning, and goal setting.
- Youth have authentic opportunities to practice and develop leadership skills.
- Youth have opportunities to make meaningful content and process choices during activities.
- Youth have opportunities to develop a sense of belonging to the program.

<sup>7</sup>Guiding Principles were adopted from Washington State's 2013 Quality Standards for After-school & Youth Development Programs. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolsoutwashington.org/userfiles/file/quality-standards-pdf-2-14-14-final-web.pdf>

# THE CORE COMPETENCIES

## DOMAIN I.

### YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS AS RESOURCES TO YOUTH

---

#### A. SAFETY

Communicating and ensuring implementation of health and safety expectations.

##### DIRECT SERVICE

1. Certified to perform basic first aid.
2. Implements key aspects of site safety plan (i.e., fire exits).
3. Keeps accurate attendance.
4. Responds calmly and effectively to a crisis.
5. Prepares the program space to be free of foreseeable hazards.
6. Maintains physical program space, equipment, and supplies in proper order.
7. Supports the safe use of technology (where appropriate) including best practices in Internet safety.
8. Anticipates unsafe situations and intervenes when they occur.
9. Understands when it is appropriate to inform and involve supervisor.
10. Can summarize legal responsibilities for reporting child abuse and report when youth may do harm to themselves or others.
11. Follows procedures for reporting incidents during program hours as required by the program policies (i.e., accidents, criminal activity, serious violation of program rules, etc.).

##### PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

12. Plans and implements practices to keep children and youth safe.
13. Communicates policies, procedures, and information to participants, families, and staff.
14. Assesses and adapts environments to ensure the safety of children and youth, including environments outside of the primary program facility.
15. Ensures adherence to health and safety regulations and policies, including those regarding the inclusion of children and youth of all cultural backgrounds and abilities.
16. Creates a learning environment that supports the physical, mental, social, and emotional health of all students.

##### ADMINISTRATION

17. Develops illness and injury procedures as well as emergency preparedness plans to protect both youth and staff.
18. Develops and implements systems for documentation and notification of suspected child abuse and neglect in accordance with state law.
19. Provides staff leadership and training while monitoring staff compliance with regulations, policies, and protocols.

## **B. HEALTH**

Supporting healthy life choices by ensuring and promoting physical, mental, social, and emotional health using appropriate methods, services, and resources.

### **DIRECT SERVICE**

1. Ensures healthy drinks are provided and that snacks or meals are healthy and timed appropriately, with youth input when possible.
2. Incorporates regular opportunities for physical activity.
3. Models an attitude and creates an environment that embraces physical, mental, social, and emotional health.

### **PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT**

4. Accommodates diverse physical, mental, social, and emotional health needs and abilities.
5. Identifies common childhood and adolescent health, behavioral, and social issues.
6. Develops appropriate support plans in collaboration with staff and/or parents to address physical, mental, social, and emotional health of participants.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

7. Assesses and adapts the program's nutrition plan.
8. Designs, implements, and monitors strategies that support physical, mental, social, emotional, and physical health of children and youth.
9. Trains staff on health-related topics.
10. Collaborates with staff to implement support plan for students and families with physical, mental, social, and emotional health concerns.

## C. PROGRAM DESIGN

*Designing a program structure and environment that supports program goals and incorporates the needs and interests of program participants.*

### DIRECT SERVICE

1. Understands basic benchmarks for youth growth and development.
2. Recognizes that children and youth have individual needs, characteristics, abilities, and rates of development.
3. Articulates program goals and understands how specific activities support those goals.
4. Regularly gathers information and feedback from program participants about their needs and interests.

### PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

5. Aligns daily practices with the program's philosophy, policies, and procedures.
6. Creates developmentally appropriate learning environments and curriculum using appropriate methods, services, and resources.
7. Participates in strategic planning and goal setting for program improvement.
8. Creates environments and learning experiences that value, affirm, and respect diverse needs, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.
9. Designs activities to support leadership opportunities that align with developmental abilities.
10. Supports the implementation of curricula and activities that are informed by child/youth culture and voice.

### ADMINISTRATION

11. Communicates the program's mission to colleagues and external stakeholders and explains its relationship to program activities, goals, and outcomes.
12. Applies current theories and research on child and youth development to program design and curriculum.
13. Collaborates with other agencies to maximize relevant, engaging, and multi-cultural opportunities for children and youth.
14. Gathers and reviews program data for timely program improvement.
15. Involves key stakeholders- including staff, board of directors, families, and youth- in decision-making about program design.
16. Facilitates meetings and trainings for staff to support the implementation of program design and curriculum.

<sup>8</sup> *Italicized portions indicate competencies added by Beyond the Bell Milwaukee.*

## **D. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

Designing and implementing program activities that support program goals and incorporate the needs and interests of program participants.

### **DIRECT SERVICE**

1. Develops ground rules in collaboration with youth.
2. Articulates a clear scope and sequence of activities.
3. Conducts activities in accordance with selected curricula.
4. Assists participants in the use of technology and the Internet (when available and appropriate).
5. Extends learning through questions and conversations.
6. Promotes and supports child-initiated and youth-led learning and activities.
7. Provides an environment that offers choices.
8. Incorporates participant team building activities to develop a sense of belonging and group identity.

### **PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT**

9. Uses effective teaching strategies to meet individual needs.
10. Provides activities that promote critical thinking and problem solving skills.
11. Incorporates activities for self-expression that reflect diverse cultural traditions.
12. Asks questions that encourage youth to think for themselves.
13. Considers development, interests, age, abilities, and skill levels when grouping children and youth.
14. Teaches participants conflict resolution and negotiation strategies and provides opportunities to practice these skills.
15. Measures outcomes by collecting and organizing participant information while following appropriate procedures for observation and assessment.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

16. Provides staff with needed materials, supplies, and preparation time.
17. Employs practices to support inclusion and universal design for learning.
18. Connects program staff to community and cultural resources.
19. Adjusts program activities as necessary, incorporating reflection and evaluation.
20. Conducts assessments and evaluations using appropriate evaluation designs and methodologies.
21. Models cultural sensitivity to staff, youth, and families.

## **DOMAIN II.**

# **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS AS PARTNERS WITH FAMILIES**

---

### **A. FAMILY**

Offering opportunities to engage and support the families of program participants, including non-traditional and extended families.

#### **DIRECT SERVICE**

1. Understands confidentiality guidelines and protects children, youth, and family confidentiality.
2. Identifies the role of family as central to the development of children and youth.
3. Communicates with families about individual participants' strengths, achievements, and challenges.
4. Looks for opportunities to involve families in activities.
5. Works effectively with families from a variety of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
6. Recognizes and respects the varying composition of traditional and non-traditional families.
7. *Enhances family support and participation through partnerships, planning and communication.*<sup>8</sup>

#### **PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT**

8. Engages families in discussions to promote respectful partnerships.
9. Shares information with families about the relationship between learning activities and development.
10. Provides opportunities for continual family involvement throughout the program.
11. Communicates with family members about program activities, goals, appropriate services, and resources.
12. Utilizes various strategies to increase family involvement.
13. Provides family members with opportunities and encouragement to be involved in decision-making.
14. Implements family engagement and communication plans.
15. *Enhances family support and participation through partnerships, planning and communication.*

#### **ADMINISTRATION**

16. Develops a family engagement and communication plan.
17. Enhances family support and participation through partnerships, planning, and communication.
18. Assesses, plans, and implements activities for family support and participation.
19. Articulates and integrates theories of family development and motivation into the program.

## **DOMAIN III.**

# **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS AS PARTNERS WITH SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES**

### **A. SCHOOLS**

Building reciprocal relationships with schools and communities, *including working with youth on school issues.*

#### **DIRECT SERVICE**

1. Conducts activities and Implements curricula that complement the school day.
2. Demonstrates awareness of local and state curriculum frameworks and standards.
3. Works cooperatively and appropriately with school staff.

#### **PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT**

4. Maintains ongoing dialogue with schools to facilitate program coordination and data sharing to address individual student academic, social, and emotional progress as appropriate.
5. Facilitates procedures for two-way communication and resource sharing between schools and programs.

#### **ADMINISTRATION**

6. Plans and participates in professional development activities with schools.
7. Creates and implements a memorandum of understanding with school partners.
8. Facilitates external communications about program successes and opportunities.
9. Develops and manages external partnerships that benefit both programs and schools.

## **B. COMMUNITIES**

Building reciprocal relationships with schools and communities, *including working with youth on issues in their community.*

### **DIRECT SERVICE**

10. Works with volunteers and partners collaboratively and appropriately.
11. Understands the larger community context in which children, youth, and families live.
12. Identifies and shares community resources that support program goals.

### **PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT**

13. Works with community to identify resources that support and assist families and enhance programming for youth and children.
14. Plans activities to acquaint youth with the larger community.
15. Follows best practices in volunteer recruitment, supervision, and coordination.
16. Builds reciprocal relationships within communities using appropriate services and resources.
17. Conducts service learning activities for program participants.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

18. Expands relationships with community partners to support program goals.
19. Creates service learning opportunities for program participants.
20. Facilitates external communications about program successes and opportunities.

## **DOMAIN IV.**

# **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS AS PARTNERS WITH COLLEAGUES & ORGANIZATIONS**

---

### **A. PROFESSIONALISM / PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Demonstrating commitment to one's own learning, skill building, and professionalism on the job.

#### **DIRECT SERVICE**

1. Supports colleagues and shares in staff duties.
2. Knows and follows organizational code of conduct.
3. Dresses appropriately for program activities and organizational environment.
4. Communicates regularly and works corroboratively with peers.
5. Takes initiative to provide ideas and feedback to improve program quality and solve problems.
6. Participates actively in program, staff, and team meetings.
7. Seeks and attends professional workshops, trainings, and conferences to increase professional competency.
8. Applies new learning to everyday work practices.
9. Appreciates new ideas and learning opportunities.
10. Seeks knowledge through interactions with other professionals.

#### **PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT**

11. Practices ongoing self-reflection, self-assessment, and problem solving strategies to promote professional growth.
12. Provides constructive feedback and support to colleagues.
13. Assists with and leads staff meetings and trainings.
14. Engages in continuous, collaborative professional development.
15. Participates in activities, projects, and events in the field.
16. Identifies professional development requirements of the field and exhibits awareness of professional standards.

#### **ADMINISTRATION**

17. Collaborates with other youth development practitioners to develop individual and group learning goals related to the core competencies.
18. Creates and implements the professional development plan and supports learning goals that will advance the skills of all staff.
19. Provides useful information and formal feedback staff about professional development goals and activities.
20. Participates as an active leader in professional associations and builds professional relationships.

## **B. SUSTAINABILITY / ADVOCACY**

Pursuing resources and policies that support programs and participants.

### **DIRECT SERVICE**

1. Understands the value of the organization and can articulate it to the greater community.
2. Recognizes the need to serve as an advocate for youth and the field of youth development.

### **PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT**

3. Organizes and executes fundraising activities.
4. Understands basic grant writing practices and contributes to grant writing and reporting when appropriate.
5. Comprehends and adheres to program budget.
6. Understands sources of funding and their requirements.
7. Communicates the importance and impact of the program in a variety of public settings.
8. Promotes leadership and advocacy for youth and colleagues.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

9. Cultivates diverse funding resources.
10. Shares and leverages resources.
11. Creates a support team with a unified vision.
12. Identifies and utilizes champions in support of the program.
13. Utilizes a variety of media effectively to promote the program.
14. Uses quantitative and qualitative data to make the case for continued support of the program.
15. Collects and shares success stories and information about program outcomes with stakeholders and the wider community.
16. Develops and continuously updates a balanced program budget that reflects expenses and income.
17. Advocates for programs and policies that impact the quality and availability of services for children, youth, and families.
18. Encourages and empowers others to engage in advocacy and leadership in the field.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---



*Core Competencies for Youth Development Practitioners* was originally developed in 2013 by the Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children. The competencies are the result of extensive work over a two-year period by dedicated individuals from the education and out-of-school time fields in Maryland.

Guiding principles around cultural competency and responsiveness and youth leadership and engagement were also adopted from Washington State's 2013 *Quality Standards for After-school & Youth Development Programs*. These standards were developed in partnership with Schools' Out Washington and the Forum for youth Investment through a nine-month process involving key stakeholders with a vested interest in the after-school and youth development field in Washington.

Beyond the Bell Milwaukee adopted these competencies and guiding principles in 2016 as a guide to strengthen the professional development system for youth work professionals in Milwaukee.



The Center for Youth Engagement is committed to increasing the quality and accessibility of opportunities for under-served youth throughout the world. We believe that all young people deserve to grow up in communities that provide quality services, opportunities, and supports needed for them to enter adulthood ready for college, work, and life-long civic engagement.

The Center for Youth Engagement manages several programs and special initiatives, including Beyond the Bell Milwaukee.



*The North American Code of Ethics for Child and Youth Care is a universal document that can be applied to all levels and settings of youth care work. The Code of Ethics establishes a framework to guide thinking and practice for all child and youth care professionals, and can be used in conjunction with the core competencies.*

### **Preamble**

Professional child and youth care is committed to promoting the well-being of children, youth and families in a context of respect and collaboration. This commitment is carried out in a variety of settings and with a board range of roles. As child and youth care professionals we are aware of, and sensitive to, the responsibilities in our practice. Each professional has the responsibility to strive for high standards of professional conduct. This includes a commitment to ethical concerns for child and youth care practice, concern with one's professional conduct, encouraging ethical behavior by others and consulting with others on ethical issues.

## **Principles and Standards**

### **I. Responsibility for self:**

- A. Maintains competency by taking responsibility for identifying, developing and fully utilizing knowledge and abilities for professional practice and by obtaining training, experience and counsel to assure competent service.
- B. High standards of professional conduct.
- C. Maintains physical and emotional well-being.

### **II. Responsibilities to the client:**

- A. Above all, shall not harm the child, youth or family by not participating in practices that are disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, intimidating, psychologically damaging, or physically harmful to clients.
- B. Provides expertise and protection through recognition, respect and advocacy for the rights of child, youth and family.
- C. Recognizes that professional responsibility is to the client and advocates for the client's best interest.
- D. Ensures that services are sensitive to, respectful of and nondiscriminatory of clients regardless of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, national ancestry, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, abilities, mental or physical handicap, political belief, political affiliation and socioeconomic status by obtaining training, experience and counsel to assure competent service.
- E. Recognizes and respects the expectations and normal life patterns of clients by the design of individual programs of child, youth and family care to help meet the psychological, physical, social, cultural and spiritual needs of clients.

- F. Recognizes that there are differences in the needs of children, youth and families and meets these on an individual basis.
- G. Fosters client self-determination.
- H. Recognizes the client's membership within a family and community, and facilitates the participation of significant others in service to the client.
- I. Respects the privacy of clients and holds in confidence information obtained in the course of professional service.
- J. Ensures that the difference between professional and personal relationships with clients is explicitly understood and respected and that the practitioner's behavior is appropriate to this difference. Sexual intimacy with a client or family member is unethical.
- K. When appropriate refers the client to other professionals and/or seeks assistance to ensure appropriate services.

### **III. Responsibilities to the employer/employing organization:**

- A. Treats colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness and good faith. Relates to the clients of colleagues with professional consideration.
- B. Respects the commitments made to the employer/employing organization.

### **IV. Responsibility to the profession:**

- A. Recognizes that in situations of professional practice the standards in this code shall guide the resolution of ethical conflicts.
- B. Promotes ethical conduct by members of the profession.
- C. Recognizes competent service often requires collaboration.
- D. Encourages collaborative participation by professionals, client, family and community to share responsibility for client outcomes.

### **V. Responsibility to society:**

- A. Contributes to the profession in making services available to the public.
- B. Takes reasonable actions to prevent and eliminate all discriminatory actions and practices.
- C. Demonstrates the standards of this code to students and volunteers.
- D. Encourages informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Adapted from the June 1994 draft of the Code of Ethics for North American Child, Youth and Family Care Professionals.

## APPENDIX B: EQUITY MANIFESTO

---



*PolicyLink is a national research and action institution advancing economic and social equity. The Equity Manifesto was created in 2015 to establish a common language and understanding of equity. It can be applied to youth work, among many other disciplines.*

It begins by joining together, believing in the potency of inclusion, and building from a common bond.

It embraces complexity as cause for collaboration, accepting that our fates are inextricable.

It recognizes local leaders as national leaders, nurturing the wisdom and creativity within every community as essential to solving the nation's problems. It demands honesty and forthrightness, calling out racism and oppression, both overt and systemic.

It strives for the power to realize our goals while summoning the grace to sustain them.

It requires that we understand the past, without being trapped in it; embrace the present, without being constrained by it; and look to the future, guided by the hopes and courage of those who have fought before and beside us.

This is equity: just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Unlocking the promise of the nation by unleashing the promise in us all.

---

---

# CORE COMPETENCIES FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS

## **SELF--ASSESSMENT TOOL**

*Adapted with permission from Montgomery County, Maryland*

Youth development practitioners can utilize this self-assessment tool to measure their knowledge and/or skills in each of the core competency domains.



## DOMAIN I: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS AS RESOURCES TO YOUTH

Click here to download a fillable form version of this document or go the Beyond the Bell website and download the document: [beyondthebellmke.org](http://beyondthebellmke.org)

		Indicator Rating: Place a check mark in column 1, 2, 3 or 4			
		1 Little (if any) exposure or experience	2 Familiarity & Understanding	3 Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	4 Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)
<b>DIRECT SERVICE</b>					
1.	Certified to perform basic first aid.				
2.	Implements key aspects of site safety plan (i.e., fire exits).				
3.	Keeps accurate attendance.				
4.	Responds calmly and effectively to a crisis.				
5.	Prepares the program space to be free of foreseeable hazards.				
6.	Maintains physical program space, equipment, and supplies in proper order.				
7.	Supports the safe use of technology (where appropriate) including best practices in Internet safety.				
8.	Anticipates unsafe situations and intervenes when they occur.				
9.	Understands when it is appropriate to inform and involve supervisor.				
10.	Can summarize legal responsibilities for reporting child abuse and report when youth may do harm to themselves or others.				
11.	Follows procedures for reporting incidents during program hours as required by the program policies (i.e., accidents, criminal activity, serious violation of program rules, etc.).				

## A. SAFETY (CONTINUED)

Communicating and ensuring implementation of health and safety expectations.

1  
Little (if any)  
exposure or  
experience

2  
Familiarity &  
Understanding

3  
Application of  
“skills” (Deeper  
Knowledge than  
Awareness)

4  
Mastery of “skills”  
(Demonstrating  
Expertise & Consistent  
Application of Skills)

## PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

1. Plans and implements practices to keep children and youth safe.				
2. Communicates policies, procedures, and information to participants, families, and staff.				
3. Assesses and adapts environments to ensure the safety of children and youth, including environments outside of the primary program facility.				
4. Ensures adherence to health and safety regulations and policies, including those regarding the inclusion of children and youth of all cultural backgrounds and abilities.				
5. Creates a learning environment that supports the physical, mental, social, and emotional health of all students.				

## ADMINISTRATION

6. Develops illness and injury procedures as well as emergency preparedness plans to protect both youth and staff.				
7. Develops and implements systems for documentation and notification of suspected child abuse and neglect in accordance with state law.				
8. Provides staff leadership and training while monitoring staff compliance with regulations, policies, and protocols.				

## B. HEALTH

Support healthy life choices by ensuring and promoting physical, mental, social, and emotional health using appropriate methods, services, and resources.

Indicator Rating: Place a check mark in column 1, 2, 3 or 4			
1 Little (if any) exposure or experience	2 Familiarity & Understanding	3 Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	4 Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)

### DIRECT SERVICE

1. Ensures healthy drinks are provided and that snacks or meals are healthy and timed appropriately, with youth input when possible.
2. Incorporates regular opportunities for physical activity.
3. Models an attitude and creates an environment that embraces physical, mental, social, and emotional health.

### PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

4. Accommodates diverse physical, mental, social, and emotional health needs and abilities.
5. Identifies common childhood and adolescent health, behavioral, and social issues.
6. Develops appropriate support plans in collaboration with staff and/or parents to address physical, mental, social, and emotional health of participants.

### ADMINISTRATION

7. Assesses and adapts the program's nutrition plan.
8. Designs, implements, and monitors strategies that support physical, mental, social, emotional, and physical health of children and youth.
9. Trains staff on health-related topics.
10. Collaborates with staff to implement support plans for students and families with physical, mental, social, and emotional health concerns.

### C. PROGRAM DESIGN

Designing a program structure and environment that supports program goals and incorporates the needs and interests of program participants.

Indicator Rating: Place a check mark in column 1, 2, 3 or 4			
1	2	3	4
Little (if any) exposure or experience	Familiarity & Understanding	Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)

### DIRECT SERVICE

1. Understands basic benchmarks for youth growth and development.				
2. Recognizes that children and youth have individual needs, characteristics, abilities, and rates of development.				
3. Articulates program goals and understands how specific activities support those goals.				
4. Regularly gathers information and feedback from program participants about their needs and interests.				

### PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

5. Aligns daily practices with the program's philosophy, policies, and procedures.				
6. Creates developmentally appropriate learning environments and curriculum using appropriate methods, services, and resources.				
7. Participates in strategic planning and goal setting for program improvement.				
8. Creates environments and learning experiences that value, affirm, and respect diverse needs, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.				
9. Designs activities to support leadership opportunities that align with developmental abilities.				
10. Supports the implementation of curricula and activities that are informed by child/youth culture and voice.				

### C. PROGRAM DESIGN (CONTINUED)

Designing a program structure and environment that supports program goals and incorporates the needs and interests of program participants.

	1 Little (if any) exposure or experience	2 Familiarity & Understanding	3 Application of “skills” (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	4 Mastery of “skills” (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>				
1. Creates developmentally appropriate learning environments and curriculum using appropriate methods, services, and resources.				
2. Participates in strategic planning and goal setting for program improvement.				
3. Creates environments and learning experiences that value, affirm, and respect diverse needs, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.				
4. Designs activities to support leadership opportunities that align with developmental abilities.				
5. Supports the implementation of curricula and activities that are informed by child/youth culture and voice.				
6. Communicates the program’s mission to colleagues and external stakeholders and explains its relationship to program activities, goals, and outcomes.				
7. Applies current theories and research on child and youth development to program design and curriculum.				
8. Collaborates with other agencies to maximize relevant, engaging, and multi-cultural opportunities for children and youth.				
9. Gathers and reviews program data for timely program improvement.				
10. Involves key stakeholders—including staff, board of directors, families, and youth—in decision-making about program design.				
11. Facilitates meetings and trainings for staff to support the implementation of program design and curriculum.				

## D. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Designing and implementing program activities that support program goals and incorporate the needs and interests of program participants.

Indicator Rating: Place a check mark in column 1, 2, 3 or 4			
1 Little (if any) exposure or experience	2 Familiarity & Understanding	3 Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	4 Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)

## DIRECT SERVICE

1. Develops ground rules in collaboration with youth.				
2. Articulates a clear scope and sequence of activities.				
3. Conducts activities in accordance with selected curricula.				
4. Assists participants in the use of technology and the Internet (when available and appropriate).				
5. Extends learning through questions and conversations.				
6. Promotes and supports child-initiated and youth-led learning and activities.				
7. Provides an environment that offers choices.				
8. Incorporates participant team building activities to develop a sense of belonging and group identity.				

## PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

9. Uses effective teaching strategies to meet individual needs.				
10. Provides activities that promote critical thinking and problem solving skills.				

## D. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

Designing and implementing program activities that support program goals and incorporate the needs and interests of program participants.

	1 Little (if any) exposure or experience	2 Familiarity & Understanding	3 Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	4 Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)
1. Incorporates activities for self-expression that reflect diverse cultural traditions.				
2. Asks questions that encourage youth to think for themselves.				
3. Considers development, interests, age, abilities, and skill levels when grouping children and youth.				
4. Teaches participants conflict resolution and negotiation strategies and provides opportunities to practice these skills.				
5. Measures outcomes by collecting and organizing participant information while following appropriate procedures for observation and assessment.				

## ADMINISTRATION

6. Provides staff with needed materials, supplies, and preparation time.				
7. Employs practices to support inclusion and universal design for learning.				
8. Connects program staff to community and cultural resources.				
9. Adjusts program activities as necessary, incorporating reflection and evaluation.				
10. Conducts assessments and evaluations using appropriate evaluation designs and methodologies.				
11. Models cultural sensitivity to staff, youth, and families.				

## DOMAIN II: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS AS PARTNERS WITH FAMILIES

		Indicator Rating: Place a check mark in column 1, 2, 3 or 4			
		1	2	3	4
		Little (if any) exposure or experience	Familiarity & Understanding	Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)
<b>A. FAMILY</b>					
Designing and implementing program activities that support program goals and incorporate the needs and interests of program participants.					
<b>DIRECT SERVICE</b>					
1.	Understands confidentiality guidelines and protects children, youth, and family confidentiality.				
2.	Identifies the role of family as central to the development of children and youth.				
3.	Communicates with families about individual participants' strengths, achievements, and challenges.				
4.	Looks for opportunities to involve families in activities.				
5.	Works effectively with families from a variety of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.				
6.	Recognizes and respects the varying composition of traditional and non-traditional families.				
<b>PROGRAM SUPERVISION &amp; MANAGEMENT</b>					
7.	Engages families in discussions to promote respectful partnerships.				
8.	Shares information with families about the relationship between learning activities and development.				
9.	Provides opportunities for continual family involvement throughout the program.				
10.	Communicates with family members about program activities, goals, appropriate services, and resources.				

## A. FAMILY (CONTINUED)

Designing and implementing program activities that support program goals and incorporate the needs and interests of program participants.

### ENTRY LEVEL

	Indicator Rating: Place a check mark in column 1, 2, 3 or 4			
	1 Little (if any) exposure or experience	2 Familiarity & Understanding	3 Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	4 Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)
1. Looks for opportunities to involve families in activities.				
2. Works effectively with families from a variety of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.				
3. Recognizes and respects the varying composition of traditional and non-traditional families.				

### PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

4. Develops a family engagement and communication plan.				
5. Enhances family support and participation through partnerships, planning, and communication.				
6. Assesses, plans, and implements activities for family support and participation.				
7. Articulates and integrates theories of family development and motivation into the program.				

## DOMAIN III: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS AS PARTNERS WITH SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES

		Indicator Rating: Place a check mark in column 1, 2, 3 or 4			
		1 Little (if any) exposure or experience	2 Familiarity & Understanding	3 Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	4 Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)
<b>A. SCHOOLS</b> Building reciprocal relationships with schools and communities.					
<b>DIRECT SERVICE</b>					
1.	Conducts activities, and implements curricula that complements the school day.				
2.	Demonstrates awareness of local and state curriculum frameworks and standards.				
3.	Works cooperatively and appropriately with school staff.				
<b>PROGRAM SUPERVISION &amp; MANAGEMENT</b>					
4.	Maintains ongoing dialogue with schools to facilitate program coordination and data sharing to address individual student academic, social, and emotional progress as appropriate.				
5.	Facilitates procedures for two-way communication and resource sharing between schools and programs.				
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>					
6.	Plans and participates in professional development activities with schools.				
7.	Creates and implements a memorandum of understanding with school partners.				
8.	Facilitates external communications about program successes and opportunities.				
9.	Develops and manages external partnerships that benefit both programs and schools.				

## B. COMMUNITIES

Building reciprocal relationships with schools and communities.

Indicator Rating: Place a check mark in column 1, 2, 3 or 4

	1 Little (if any) exposure or experience	2 Familiarity & Understanding	3 Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	4 Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)
1. Works with volunteers and partners collaboratively and appropriately.				
2. Understands the larger community context in which children, youth, and families live.				
3. Identifies and shares community resources that support program goals.				

## PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

4. Works with community to identify resources that support and assist families and enhance programming for youth and children.				
5. Plans activities to acquaint youth with the larger community.				
6. Follows best practices in volunteer recruitment, supervision, and coordination.				
7. Builds reciprocal relationships within communities using appropriate services and resources.				
8. Conducts service learning activities for program participants.				

## ADMINISTRATION

9. Expands relationships with community partners to support program goals.				
10. Creates service-learning opportunities for program participants.				

## DOMAIN IV: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS AS PARTNERS WITH COLLEAGUES & ORGANIZATIONS

A. PROFESSIONALISM / PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT		Indicator Rating: Place a check mark in column 1, 2, 3 or 4			
Demonstrating commitment to one's own learning, skill building, and professionalism on the job.		1 Little (if any) exposure or experience	2 Familiarity & Understanding	3 Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	4 Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)
<b>DIRECT SERVICE</b>					
1.	Supports colleagues and shares in staff duties.				
2.	Knows and follows organizational code of conduct.				
3.	Dresses appropriately for program activities and organizational environment.				
4.	Communicates regularly and works collaboratively with peers.				
5.	Takes initiative to provide ideas and feedback to improve program quality and solve problems.				
6.	Participates actively in program, staff, and team meetings.				
7.	Seeks and attends professional workshops, trainings, and conferences to increase professional competency.				
8.	Applies new learning to everyday work practices.				
9.	Appreciates new ideas and learning opportunities.				
10.	Seeks knowledge through interactions with other professionals.				
<b>PROGRAM SUPERVISION &amp; MANAGEMENT</b>					
11.	Practices ongoing self-reflection, self-assessment, and problem solving strategies to promote professional growth.				

## A. PROFESSIONALISM / PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CONTINUED)

Demonstrating commitment to one's own learning, skill building, and professionalism on the job.

Indicator Rating: Place a check mark in column 1, 2, 3 or 4			
1	2	3	4
Little (if any) exposure or experience	Familiarity & Understanding	Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)

## PROGRAM SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

1. Practices ongoing self-reflection, self-assessment, and problem solving strategies to promote professional growth.				
2. Assists with and leads staff meetings and trainings.				
3. Engages in continuous, collaborative professional development.				
4. Participates in activities, projects, and events in the field.				
5. Identifies professional development requirements of the field and exhibits awareness of professional standards.				

## ADMINISTRATION

6. Collaborates with other youth development practitioners to develop individual and group learning goals related to the core competencies.				
7. Creates and implements the professional development plan and supports learning goals that will advance the skills of all staff.				
8. Provides useful information and formal feedback to staff about professional development goals and activities.				
9. Participates as an active leader in professional associations and builds professional relationships.				

**Indicator Rating: Place a check mark in column 1, 2, 3 or 4**

**B. SUSTAINABILITY / ADVOCACY**  
Pursuing resources and policies that support programs and participants.

**ENTRY LEVEL**

	1 Little (if any) exposure or experience	2 Familiarity & Understanding	3 Application of "skills" (Deeper Knowledge than Awareness)	4 Mastery of "skills" (Demonstrating Expertise & Consistent Application of Skills)
1. Understands the value of the organization and can articulate it to the greater community.				
2. Recognizes the need to serve as an advocate for youth and the field of youth development.				

**INTERMEDIATE LEVEL**

3. Organizes and executes fundraising activities.				
4. Understands basic grant writing practices and contributes to grant writing and reporting when appropriate.				
5. Comprehends and adheres to program budget.				
6. Understands sources of funding and their requirements.				
7. Communicates the importance and impact of the program in a variety of public settings.				
8. Promotes leadership and advocacy for youth and colleagues.				



# CORE COMPETENCIES FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS

*Milwaukee, Wisconsin - 2016  
Adapted with permission from Montgomery County, Maryland*