

THE NEBRASKA EARLY CHILDHOOD COACHING GUIDEBOOK:

Competencies for Professional Practice



COMPETENCY DOMAIN #1: Setting the Foundation

Rationale: Setting the foundation for a successful coaching relationship includes meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards, and establishing the coaching agreement. Understanding what is required in the specific coaching interaction and coming to an agreement about the coaching process and relationship will set the stage for the work to come. Coaches may have to make difficult decisions that have moral and ethical implications during their work coaching early childhood professionals. Using a code of ethics provides important guidance when ethical issues arise.

Setting the Foundation

The coach:

1. Effectively explains the goals and parameters of the coaching initiative in which the coach and coachee are partnering. These may include time commitment, logistics, expected outcomes and measures of success, reporting requirements, resources available, confidentiality, roles of other parties, etc. (funders, project coordinators, evaluators)
2. Sets mutually defined and individualized goals and coaching agendas that align with those of the coachee, the early childhood program in which the coachee works, and the coaching initiative
3. Reaches agreement with the coachee about each partner's roles and responsibilities, and the expectations for coaching interactions (ie. norms/structure related to coaching sessions, giving and receiving feedback, follow through on tasks, etc)
4. Supports collaboration with other coaching efforts if the coachee is participating in more than one coaching initiative
5. Demonstrates understanding of coaching ethics and standards and the ability to apply them appropriately in all coaching situations (ie. International Coach Federation (ICF) – <https://coachfederation.org/code-of-ethics>; and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Code of Ethical Conduct – <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/ethical-conduct>)
6. Maintains professionalism by being on time, organized and prepared for each coaching session. Maintains boundaries and respects confidentiality
7. Maintains documentation of coaching visits and other initiative specific documentations.

COMPETENCY DOMAIN #2: Co-Creating the Relationship

Rationale: To establish a truly collaborative relationship, the coach must foster a safe, reflective, and supportive environment that produces ongoing mutual respect and trust. This requires being present and in relationship with the coachee in the moment, employing a style that is open, flexible, confident, and focused on coachee strengths. Through this process, the coachee is invited to participate as a full partner with the coach.

Additionally, effective communication is critical in all aspects of a coaching relationship. A coach must be able to focus completely on what the coachee is communicating to understand the coachee's intent in the context of their values, goals, and to support the coachee self-expression. Active listening and inquiry are used to gather information and to stimulate thinking in support of the coachee's learning and goals. Ultimately, a coach seeks to use language that has the greatest positive impact on the coachee.

Co-Creating the Relationship

The coach:

1. Uses positive interpersonal skills to develop a respectful and responsive relationship with the coachee
2. Is fully attentive, shifting perspectives and coaching approaches as needed in the moment
3. Demonstrates respect for, and interest in, the individual abilities and uniqueness of the coachee, and the context of the individual setting
4. Partners with the coachee to identify unique learning and communication styles and preferences
5. Identifies and acknowledges the strengths of the coachee and remains focused on the coachee's needs
6. Provides ongoing support for new knowledge, skills, and dispositions, focusing on incremental changes over time while celebrating coachee's successes and capabilities for future growth
7. Demonstrates a commitment to the concept of shared learning by using strategies that encourage shared decision making, joint planning, and mutual goal setting
8. Demonstrates cultural humility and understands its relevance to the relationship (ie. adopts practices to be gender-neutral, racially, socio-economically and ability inclusive)
9. Provides support to make community (e.g. town, school, childcare setting, etc.) connections that build and expand collaborative relationships and utilizes community resources
10. Models openness to new learning, new strategies, risk-taking, and problem-solving
11. Demonstrates empathy through recognition of challenges identified by the coachee

COMPETENCY DOMAIN #3: Facilitating Learning Through Coaching Strategies

Rationale: A coach models and facilitates continuous improvement. As a learning facilitator, the coach helps coordinate and guide learning experiences for the coachee using a variety of coaching strategies including joint planning, action, observation, reflection, and feedback. These coaching strategies are informed by data/information and utilize an intentional continuous quality improvement process.

Coaches also understand that facilitating learning of the coachee is not a linear process rather, consider this learning circular and based on the needs of the coachee. In short, the coaching strategies are applied in a unique and individualized manner. Even though the strategies used are indicative of coaching, no two coaching interactions look the same. Each coachee has their own set of strengths and needs while each coach uses the coaching strategies in a unique way.

Facilitating Learning Through Coaching Strategies:

The coach:

Joint Planning

1. Supports the coachee in identifying goal(s) related to data (observation or other information) and/or initiative specific needs
2. Collaborates with coachee to create a plan for achieving the goals including:
 - o steps towards achieving goals and identifying roles
 - o identifying possible challenges and potential solutions
 - o identifying how new knowledge or skills will be gained
 - o promoting flexible thinking/openness to new ideas
3. Determines, with coachee, how they will know if the goal is achieved

Action and Implementation

1. Plans for meetings with coachee by reviewing data, joint action plan, prior notes and gathering resources/new information
2. Supports coachee's actions with children/families related to identified goals through the use of:
 - o Modeling best practices
 - o Opportunities to use learning strategies together
 - o Providing in-the-moment guidance

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COMPETENCY DOMAIN #3: Facilitating Learning Through Coaching Strategies

Facilitating Learning Through Coaching Strategies:

The coach:

Observation

1. Coach or coachee observes the other with a purpose based on the joint action plan
2. Objectively observes coachee to collect relevant data and/or new information

Reflection

1. Uses open-ended questions and active listening to facilitate learning
2. Understands the importance of collaboratively reflecting on data/information with coachee about the progress towards goals/action steps
3. Reflects with coachee following an observation to:
 - o identify coachee strengths
 - o notice areas of growth/progress towards goals
 - o support the coachee to identify next possible areas for learning and growth
4. Co-determines gaps in knowledge and identifies resources as appropriate

Feedback

1. Celebrates coachee strengths and provides positive feedback on actions related to identified goal(s)
2. Provides objective and nonjudgmental feedback
3. Introduces new topics based upon the coachee's interests, needs, and goals
4. Facilitates connections between previous knowledge and new learning/information
5. Offers suggestions only when solicited and after careful consideration of the appropriateness, and usefulness, of this type of feedback.

COMPETENCY DOMAIN #4: Assessing Success of the Coaching Partnership

Rationale: A productive coaching partnership depends on assessing the effectiveness of the coaching relationship. This includes reflecting on coach success, coachee success, and the partnership success through information/data gathered during the coaching partnership. Competent coaches identify criteria for success based on mutual goals while including the coachee in the evaluation process.

Assessing Success of the Coaching Partnership:

Assessing coach success

1. Utilizes Coaching Competencies to engage in self-reflection on coaching practices
2. Collects and uses informal and formal feedback from coachee(s) regarding the coachee's experience of, and satisfaction with, the coaching process
3. Reflects on coaching practice in relation to coachee growth

Assessing coachee success (how well is the coachee doing the following):

1. Expansion of the coachee's ability to self-reflect, self-analyze, and self-modify
2. Increase in the coachee's skills and knowledge
3. Evidence of improvement in the coachee's application of new and/or improved skills, abilities, and knowledge, in relation to their joint action plan

Assessing partnership Success

1. Tracks coaching progress and success through review of: data, joint action plan, and prior notes
2. Evaluates data demonstrating progress towards mutually defined goals
3. Coach and coachee are given an opportunity to identify the success of the coaching partnership

Developed collaboratively by the Nebraska Early Childhood Coach Development Team