

## **CDA\_CSI\_W: Establishing and Maintaining a Safe, Healthy Learning Environment Handout**

### **Welcome to CDA\_CSI\_W**

The following exercises will help you prepare for writing your final competency statement. You can write your responses in the space provided, on a separate sheet of paper, or on your computer. Your responses should state your goals or objectives for children and give specific examples of what you do with the children to achieve those goals.

### **Objectives:**

Participants will meet the following objectives as a result of taking this course:

- Communicate the importance of establishing and maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment
- Describe how current practices implemented in the learning environment establish and maintain a safe and healthy learning environment
- Organize, draft, and revise a clear reflective competency statement

### **References:**

Washington, V. (2017). *Essentials for working with young children*. Washington, DC.: Council for Professional Recognition.

### **Practice Exercises**

Your response to each question represents a single paragraph in your overall statement. ***Your entire statement should be no more than 500 words when all responses are combined. Keep the focus on your CDA setting (Infant/Toddler, Preschool, and Family Child Care).***

#### **Exercise 1**

Why is it important to create a safe learning environment for young children? Describe things you do regularly to keep children safe.

**Exercise 2**

Why is it important to promote health in the program? How do you promote good health and nutrition regularly?

**Exercise 3**

Why is it important to create a supportive learning environment for young children? What are the ways that you ensure a supportive learning environment for all children?

**Additional Questions (Required for your final Competency Statement, but not for this course):**

**CS I a:** Reflect on the sample menu in the *Resource Collection* (RC I-2): If you designed the menu, how does it reflect your commitment to children's nutritional needs? If you did not design it, what are its strengths and/or what would you change?

**CS I b:** Reflect on the room environment in which your CDA Verification Visit<sup>®</sup> Observation will occur: How does the room design reflect the way you believe young children learn best? If the room was not designed by you, what do you see as its strengths and/or what would you change?

**CS I c:** Reflect on the weekly plan you included in your *Resource Collection* (RC I-3). How does this plan reflect your philosophy of what young children need on a weekly basis? If the plan was not designed by you, what do you see as its strengths and/or what would you change?

# Competency Standard I:

## To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment

### Developmental Contexts

#### Functional Area 1: Safe

**Young and mobile infants** (*birth–17 months*) need affectionate and competent physical care geared to their individual needs and rhythms. Adults support infants by establishing routines that regulate their eating, sleeping, and other activities gradually, while continuing to balance the infant's and the group's needs.

**Toddlers** (*18–36 months*) imitate and learn from the activities of those around them. Safety awareness can be established through modeling, encouraging, and discussions about safe behaviors. Toddlers are increasingly curious about their world. They stretch boundaries and test everything in their surroundings. Adults must be attentive to their activities and ensure their safety while giving them simple explanations for safety precautions.

**Preschoolers** (*3–5 years old*) are gradually able to understand the relative danger or safety of situations. In a safe setting, children will gradually learn to protect themselves and look out for others.

#### Functional Area 2: Healthy

**Young and mobile infants** (*birth–17 months*) need affectionate and competent physical care geared to their individual health, physical growth, and nutrition. Adults *individualize* infants' eating, sleeping, and other daily routines, while continuing to balance the infant's and the group's needs.

**Toddlers** (*18–36 months*) imitate and learn from those around them. Good health habits can be established through modeling and encouraging handwashing, nutritious eating, etc.

**Preschoolers** (*3–5 years old*) are ready to learn the reasons and take responsibility for good health practices including hygiene, handwashing, and good nutrition. They are fascinated by their own bodily functions and can gradually learn about them.

# Competency Standard I (continued)

## Functional Area 3: Learning Environment

**Young infants** (*birth–8 months*) are learning from their immediate surroundings and daily experiences with a few important people. The sense of well-being and emotional security conveyed by a loving and skilled provider create a readiness for other experiences. Before infants can creep and crawl, adults should provide a variety of sensory experiences and encourage movement and playfulness.

**Mobile infants** (*9–17 months*) are active, independent, and curious. They are increasingly persistent and purposeful in doing things. They need many opportunities to practice new skills and explore the setting within safe boundaries. Adults can share children's delight in themselves, their skills, and discoveries and gradually add variety to the learning setting that will continue to foster relationships and exploration.

**Toddlers** (*18–36 months*) are developing new language skills, physical control, and awareness of themselves and others each day. They enjoy participating in planned and group activities, but they are not yet ready to sit still or work in a group for a very long time. Adults can support their learning in all areas by maintaining a setting that is dependable but flexible enough to provide opportunities for them to extend their skills, understanding, and judgment in individualized ways.

**Preschoolers** (*3–5 years old*) continue to develop new language skills, physical control, and awareness of themselves and others each day. They enjoy participation in planned and group activities. They learn by doing. Adults can support their learning in all areas by maintaining a setting that has a wide range of exploratory and adaptive materials; provides opportunities for them to extend their vocabulary, mathematical, and scientific skills; and promotes social and emotional growth. Adults can observe children's play; give them time and space to repeat familiar activities; and expand the learning setting in response to their developing skills, interests, and concerns about themselves and their world.

## The Reflective Statements of Competence

Prepare six written reflections on your own teaching practices. You must write one Reflective Statement for each of the six CDA Competency Standards (see below for specific requirements). Many of the Statements require the use of specific Resources from your *Resource Collection*, above, as the focus of that written reflection. Each Statement should be no more than 500 words in length.

### CSI Competency Statement I (*To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment*):

Begin your Reflective Statement about this Competency Standard with a paragraph describing how your teaching practices meet this Standard (Note: alternatively, you may also choose to write one paragraph for each Functional Area, if this makes it easier to express your thoughts more clearly).

Then write at least one paragraph on each of the following:

- CS I a Reflect on the sample menu in the *Resource Collection* (RC I-2): If you designed the menu, how does it reflect your commitment to children's nutritional needs? If you did not design it, what are its strengths and/or what would you change?
- CS I b Reflect on the room environment in which your Verification Visit Observation will occur: How does the room design reflect the way you believe young children learn best? If the room was not designed by you, what do you see as its strengths and/or what would you change?
- CS I c Reflect on the weekly plan you included in your *Resource Collection* (RC I-3). How does this plan reflect your philosophy of what young children need on a weekly basis? If the plan was not designed by you, what do you see as its strengths and/or what would you change?

### CSII Competency Statement II (*To advance physical and intellectual competence*):

Begin your Reflective Statement about this Competency Standard with a paragraph describing how your teaching practices meet this Standard (Note: alternatively, you may also choose to write one paragraph for each Functional Area, if this makes it easier to express your thoughts more clearly).

Then prepare at least one paragraph on each of the following:

- CS II a Pick one of the nine learning experiences you chose for your *Resource Collection* (RC II). How does this experience reflect your philosophy of how to support young children's *physical* development?



- CS II b Pick another of the nine learning experiences you chose for your *Resource Collection* (RC II). How does this experience reflect your philosophy of how to support young children's *cognitive* development?
- CS II c Pick a third learning experience you chose for your *Resource Collection* (RC II). How does this experience reflect your philosophy of how to support young children's *creative* development?
- CS II d In an additional paragraph, describe ways to promote the communication/ language development among all children, including dual language learners.

**CSIII Competency Statement III** (*To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance*):

Begin your Reflective Statement about this Competency Standard with a paragraph describing how your teaching practices meet this Standard (Note: alternatively, you may also choose to write one paragraph for each Functional Area, if this makes it easier to express your thoughts more clearly).

Then prepare at least one paragraph on each of the following:

- CS III a Describe some of the ways you support the development of children's positive self-concepts and growing social/emotional skills.
- CS III b Reflect on your philosophy of guiding young children's *positive* behaviors. How is your professional philosophy similar or different from how you were guided as a child? How do you constructively deal with young children's *challenging* behaviors?

**CSIV Competency Statement IV** (*To establish positive and productive relationships with families*):

Begin your Reflective Statement about this Competency Standard with a paragraph describing how your teaching practices meet this Standard.

Then prepare at least one paragraph on each of the following:

- CS IV a How do you ensure that families are kept aware of what's happening in their child's daily/weekly life in your program?
- CS IV b How do you ensure that you are aware of what's happening in each child's home life? How does that awareness direct your teaching practices?
- CS IV c Reflect on the feedback you received in the *Family Questionnaires* you collected (please see pp. 10-11). Explain how the responses surprised you, confirmed your own reflections about yourself and/or gave you a new goal for professional growth.

**CSV Competency Statement V** (*To ensure a well-run, purposeful program that is responsive to participant needs*):

Begin your Reflective Statement about this Competency Standard with a paragraph describing how your teaching practices meet this Standard.

CS V a Then write at least one paragraph that describes how you used the observation tool/form you included in the *Resource Collection* (RC V). Why are observation and documentation important parts of program management? How do you ensure that you are accurately/objectively observing and tracking each child's developmental and learning progress?

**CSV I Competency Statement VI** (*To maintain a commitment to professionalism*):

Begin your Reflective Statement about this Competency Standard with a paragraph describing how your professional practices meet this Standard. Then:

CS VI a Reflect on why you chose to become an early childhood professional.

CS VI b Reflect on what you believe are the most important indicators of professionalism that you possess.

## The Professional Philosophy Statement

The *Professional Philosophy Statement* is the final reflective task in the creation of your *Professional Portfolio*. Here you will summarize your professional beliefs and values about early childhood education after you have completed the professional development experience of designing your Portfolio by collecting resources and writing all six *Reflective Statements of Competence*. The *Professional Philosophy Statement* should be no more than two pages in length.

Identify your personal values and beliefs around teaching and learning: How do you believe young children learn? Based on this, what do you believe your role is? Beyond teaching and learning, reflect and write about what you believe are the other important aspects of your role in the lives of children and families.

### **Bring Your Professional Portfolio to your Verification Visit!**

Once you have completed the preparation of your *Professional Portfolio*, please hold on to it until your Verification Visit, at which time your PD Specialist will review it.

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**RC VI-3** Summaries of the **legal requirements** in your state regarding child abuse and neglect (including contact information for the appropriate agency in your state) and Mandatory Reporting Guidelines.

## **The Reflective Statements of Competence**

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### **CSI Competency Statement I** (*To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment*):

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Then write at least one paragraph on each of the following:

CS I a Reflect on the sample menu in the *Resource Collection* (RC I-2): If you designed the menu, how does it reflect your commitment to children's nutritional needs? If you did not design it, what are its strengths and/or what would you change?

CS I b Reflect on the room environment in which your Verification Visit Observation will occur: How does the room design reflect the way you believe young children learn best? If the room was not designed by you, what do you see as its strengths and/or what would you change?

Additionally, reflect on and describe the similarities and differences between room environments designed for infants as compared to toddlers.

CS I c Reflect on the weekly plan you included in your *Resource Collection* (RC I-3). How does this plan reflect your philosophy of what young children need on a weekly basis? If the plan was not designed by you, what do you see as its strengths and/or what would you change?

Additionally, describe how you would adapt this weekly plan for use with each of the three age groups (young infants, mobile infants and toddlers).

## **CSII Competency Statement II** *(To advance physical and intellectual competence):*

Begin your Reflective Statement about this Competency Standard with a paragraph describing how your teaching practices meet this Standard (Note: alternatively, you may also choose to write one paragraph for each Functional Area, if this makes it easier to express your thoughts more clearly). Then prepare at least one paragraph on each of the following:

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- CS II c Pick a third learning experience you chose for your *Resource Collection* (RC II). How does this experience reflect your philosophy of how to support young children's *creative* development?
- CS II d In an additional paragraph, describe ways to promote the communication/ language development among all children, including dual language learners.

## **CSIII Competency Statement III** *(To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance):*

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**CSIV Competency Statement IV** (*To establish positive and productive relationships with families*):

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Then prepare at least one paragraph on each of the following:

- CS I Va How do you ensure that families are kept aware of what's happening in their child's daily/weekly life in your program?
- CS I Vb How do you ensure that you are aware of what's happening in each child's home life? How does that awareness direct your teaching practices?
- CS I Vc Reflect on the feedback you received in the *Family Questionnaires* you collected (please see pp. 10-11). Explain how the responses surprised you, confirmed your own reflections about yourself and/or gave you a new goal for professional growth.

**CSV Competency Statement V** (*To ensure a well-run, purposeful program that is responsive to participant needs*):

Begin your Reflective Statement about this Competency Standard with a paragraph describing how your teaching practices meet this Standard.

- CS V a Then write at least one paragraph that describes how you used the observation tool/form you included in the *Resource Collection* (RC V). Why are observation and documentation important parts of program management? How do you ensure that you are accurately/objectively observing and tracking each child's developmental and learning progress?

**CSVI Competency Statement VI** (*To maintain a commitment to professionalism*):

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- CS I c Reflect on the weekly plan you included in your *Resource Collection* (RC I-3). How does this plan reflect your philosophy of what young children need on a weekly basis? If the plan was not designed by you, what do you see as its strengths and/or what would you change?

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- CS IV c Reflect on the feedback you received in the *Family Questionnaires* you collected (please see pp. 12-13). Explain how the responses surprised you, confirmed your own reflections about yourself and/or gave you a new goal for professional growth.



**CSV Competency Statement V** (*To ensure a well-run, purposeful program that is responsive to participant needs*):

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CS V a Then write at least one paragraph that describes how you used the observation tool/form you included in the Resource Collection (RC V). Why are observation and documentation important parts of program management? How do you ensure that you are accurately/objectively observing and tracking each child's developmental and learning progress?

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