



Montana Early Childhood Project

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**for the Practitioner Registry,
Training Approval, & Professional
Development Specialist Directory**

June 2011

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Practitioner Registry and Professional Development Specialist (PDS) Directory General Information

1. Eligibility

- a. Any individual working directly in early care and education with children birth through age eight in Montana or any individual who works in a setting that supports early childhood professionals through training, education, or other services is eligible to apply to The Montana Practitioner Registry. This includes all center, group and family child care program personnel. Roles include: Registered Family Child Care Home, Registered Group Child Care Home, Early Childhood Teacher, Early Childhood Assistant Teacher, Home Visitor, Pre-K through Grade 3 Teacher, School-Age Program Teacher, Program Administrator, Director, Child/Family Service Agency Staff, Higher Education Faculty, EC Trainer/Coordinator, Community Agency Staff, Government Agency Staff and Child Care Licensor.
- b. Any professional who provides education, training, coaching or technical assistance may participate in Montana's Professional Development Specialist (PDS)/Trainer Directory.
- c. Eligibility and program information is distributed via brochures, newsletters, the Montana Early Childhood Project (ECP) website, application, and at conferences, meetings, and presentations.
- d. Any professional wishing to participate on the Practitioner Registry will complete and submit the current electronic application or paper application.
- e. Only the current version of the paper application form will be accepted. If an outdated version of the application is submitted, the original application will be returned to the participant along with a copy of the current application and written instructions on how to use the online system. Current application is dated March 2009.
- f. In order for an application to be processed, it must contain the applicant's date of birth and last five digits of their social security number, signature on Release Statement and \$25.00 enrollment fee. If these items are not included, the ECP will contact the applicant by email or if no email is available, a letter will be sent by postal mail.

2. Accessibility

- a. The ECP shall assure quality services and comply with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

- b. ECP staff have access to campus training on diversity, cultural sensitivity, customer service and treat all program participants and partners with respect. Staff meetings are held on a regular basis on the 3rd Wednesday of every month where staff may discuss issues and interactions with participants.
- c. ECP staff are sensitive to language needs and special accommodations necessary to assist all early childhood professionals to fully participate in programs. ECP staff will seek external assistance to successfully work with participants. TDD services are available through Montana State University-Bozeman.
- d. ECP staff do not transport participants.
- e. The ECP office is open Monday-Friday from 8:00 to 4:00 with voice mail services after hours and on weekends. ECP offers an 800 number so phone access is free. The ECP on-line application process is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition participants can email ecp@montana.edu at any time with questions or concerns. Voice mails and emails are returned the following business day unless staff are ill or out of the office on business or personal travel.

3. Rights of Participants/Confidentiality

- a. It is the responsibility of ECP to protect participants' information, privacy confidentiality of all information. A Privacy Policy is included as part of the application process and must be agreed to for the application to be processed. The Privacy Policy outlines the parameters by which registry data are shared with funders, partners and others.
- b. Registry files are kept in locked file cabinets in a locked office on the MSU campus. Electronic information is kept in a secure database. All ECP staff are required to be vigilante about confidentiality of information at all times. ECP staff must ask for birth date plus last five of SSN to verify identity before releasing any confidential information to a participant.
- c. ECP staff will not use participant's names in public or email confidential information.
- d. Each ECP staff member must sign a confidentiality statement upon employment that is stored in their personnel file. Infractions will be addressed to the ECP Director for follow-up. Staff are routinely reminded of their confidentiality obligations in monthly staff meetings and in annual performance reviews required by Montana State University. The Early Childhood Project educates and trains staff both initially and on an

ongoing basis on the policy and procedures. All staff are required to read the Policy and Procedure Manual, and identify questions that arise and reviewing these with the ECP Program Manager. Questions that occur at other times regarding policy and procedure are reported to the ECP Program Manager who records them on the issues log and reports the issue verbally to the ECP Director. They determine next steps and whether to place it on the next staff meeting or board agenda. All staff may suggest agenda items for staff meetings to the Director prior to the next scheduled meeting. All staff and board members may suggest agenda items for upcoming board meetings to the ECP Director. ECP has monthly staff meetings to discuss new policy or procedures and input is solicited from staff and/or the advisory board before a change is adopted. In-depth training is completed by the ECP Director and Program manager to discuss how policy will be implemented. The Director and Program Manager monitor phone calls in an informal way to assure that questions are being answered appropriately, privacy is being respected, and release of confidential information does not occur. If there are specific questions about the release of data, those requests are reviewed by the ECP Director prior to the release of data.

- e. The current ECP database is password protected and has a secure SSL connection.

4. Social Security Numbers

- a. Social Security Numbers were used from 1998 through 2008 to link participants to the state child care database. The Social Security Number is never displayed on the web or on any report provided to partners. Beginning in 2009, the unique identifier for each individual has provided the link. The unique identifier is birth date (mmddyyyy)+last five digits of the Social Security Number. The Social Security Numbers on old applications will be kept in locked file cabinets. Only last five digits of Social Security Numbers are kept in our current database.
- b. If an applicant does not provide the last five digits of the Social Security Number or date of birth on a paper application, the original application will be returned to the applicant.
- c. State child care licensing assigns unique PS numbers and roles to individuals. These numbers are used to track approved training hours for licensed/registered practitioners.
- d. State licensors in the Quality Assurance Division, state Early Childhood Services Bureau staff who monitor the Best Beginnings quality initiatives and ECP staff who manage the Career Development program have access to training records. Individual practitioners and anyone to whom they

give their PS number also has access. The records are accessible online by entering the PS number or unique identifier of the individual.

- e. Once an application has been submitted or a participant has created an online account, participants are assigned a six digit Registry ID number that is used whenever an identification number is needed. The Registry ID is used to login to the secure website.

5. PS Numbers and State Child Care Database (CCUBS) Interface

- a. CCUBS interface to ECP database occurs once a week on Monday morning.
- b. The system does not override last name, Social Security Number or birthdate from CCUBS.
- c. PS number cards are mailed on a monthly basis to all new participants in the database that come across from CCUBS. The database generates a list of these participants and their mailing address.
- d. If a PS number card is returned to ECP because of an incorrect address, ECP staff will either update the database with the new address listed on the envelope and resend the PS number card or discard if no forwarding address is listed. Envelopes with updated address will be batched and sent to Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB) monthly so they can update CCUBS with the new address.
- e. When a participant calls and does not know their PS number, ECP staff will look them up in our database after verifying their identity by requesting birth date and last five digits of Social Security Number. ECP staff sends out replacement PS number cards on the first of each month to individuals who request them.
- f. If the participant is not in the database or only in the database because they are on The Practitioner Registry, but have no PS# listed, they are instructed to contact their local child care licenser to make sure all of their paperwork is complete. They have likely not completed paperwork for licensing so their information has not gone into CCUBS and they have not come across to the ECP system.
- g. If a person is in CCUBS with a PS number, but they have not come across to ECP database, ECP staff will contact ECSB staff to check CCUBS to make sure all information in CCUBS is correct. Once ECSB staff has fixed the participant's record, they will come across to the ECP database the following Monday.

- h. A file is received weekly via SFTP generated by state system (CCUBS). It contains all records related to regulated child care. The CCUBS facility number (PV#) records on the ECP program tables are either updated or if new, inserted. No regulated child care (PV#) can be created by any user including ECP. No user interface for editing those records exists for any user including ECP and so those records are completely controlled by the CCUBS data warehouse system.

6. Email Policy

- a. All emails relating to a specific program participant will be printed and filed in the participant's file.
- b. ECP staff will never email confidential information such as Social Security Numbers and birth dates of individuals.
- c. ECP staff will make the subject line concise and meaningful, relating to the email content. Subject lines become the file name when an email is saved.

7. Signature on Release Statement

- a. A signature on the release statement is required for participation on the Practitioner Registry and Professional Development Specialist (PDS)/Trainer Directory.
- b. The participant's signature on the release statement indicates that he/she is verifying that all information provided is accurate. The signature on the release statement also indicates that the participant has read and understands the potential uses for his/her Registry and/or PDS data.
- c. If a paper application does not provide a signature on the release statement, the application will be returned to the applicant for completion via postal mail.

8. Fraud

- a. Fraud is the intentional misrepresentation of information to gain an unfair advantage over an individual or a system. Examples of fraud with The Practitioner Registry/PDS Directory include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Supplying false information, such as altered transcript copies
 - ii. Misrepresentation of supervised teaching hours
 - iii. Falsification of training hours or certificates
- b. All ECP staff and participants are obligated to report to the ECP director any suspicion of fraudulent practices within the system.
- c. The ECP director will determine the need for written documentation of the fraudulent acts or more information. The matter will be shared with all

ECP staff and a decision will be made to take to the Career Development Advisory Board for further action. It will be the responsibility of the ECP director to document all activity in the process of investigating fraud.

- d. The participant is notified in writing of any action taken after investigation by the director and/or Career Development Advisory Board.
- e. If fraud is substantiated, the fraudulent information will not be entered into The Registry database for determination of a Career Path level. The applicant will be informed in writing of the decision to not accept the information. If appropriate, a letter will be sent to DPHHS's QAD, ECSB and/or the participant's program director. The individual may appeal the decision by following the appeal process described later in this policy manual.
- f. If corrective action is appropriate, that too will be documented in writing and placed in the participant's file.
- g. ECP staff reviews all documentation for possible fraud. ECP staff are trained to look for fraudulent transcripts that may have been altered, documentation that may have been altered such as training attendance rosters with similar signatures or handwriting, or duplicated or altered training certificates that are not the same template as the ECP certificate template. Fraud will also be investigated if a report or referral is made to the ECP by an external party. Suspected fraud is reported directly to the ECP Director who investigates the evidence, consults with appropriate people, funders, board and other ECP staff as necessary. Confidentiality is maintained and a summary of the investigation, results and action taken is filed in Reported Fraud file. **If fraud is suspected on unofficial transcripts a request for official sealed transcripts from the college will be requested.**

9. Monitoring and Reporting Services

- a. The ECP will maintain all required records and make them available to funders for review upon request.
- b. The ECP reports to the ECSB on a quarterly basis as the primary funding source.
- c. Partner organizations such as Head Start or Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&R's) may request data reports in writing.
- d. The Career Development Advisory Board receives biannual reports and updates.
- e. Aggregate statistics are available upon written request.

10. Level Appeal and Grievance Procedures

- a. Any participant may appeal their Career Path Level. The ECP Director and/or Program Manager refer participants to the website where the appeal process is outlined at www.mtecp.org/practitioner/html.
- b. All appeals/grievances must be submitted in writing to the ECP Director. Any participant inquiring about the appeal process will be referred to the ECP Director.
- c. The Practitioner Registry (PR) Appeal Process is as follows: 1) Applicant submits official letter of appeal to ECP Director explaining their perspective and including additional documentation of course work, training and experience. 2) ECP Director summarizes appeal via email to the PR Appeal Committee for review and arranges conference call for discussion and decision. 3) If requested level is granted, the appropriate certificate and processing is completed at ECP and sent to applicant. 4) If denied, the applicant is notified in writing of the decision and they will be placed at the level on the Career Path for which they qualify. 5) An individual has the right to resubmit an appeal to the committee. 6) A copy of the letter is placed in the individual's file along with all appeal documents.
- d. The Registry Appeal Committee consists of the ECP Director, an early childhood higher education representative, and one other Career Development Board member. The appeal process may take up to six weeks to complete. Each appeal is considered on a case-by-case basis.
- e. All Professional Development Specialist (PDS) Appeals must be addressed to the ECP Professional Development Coordinator.
- f. The PDS Directory Appeal Process is as follows: 1) Applicant submits official letter of appeal to the Professional Development Coordinator explaining their perspective and including additional documentation of course work, training and experience. 2) The coordinator summarizes the appeal via email to Appeal Committee for review and arranges conference call for discussion and decision. 3) If requested level is granted, the appropriate certificate and processing is completed at ECP and sent to applicant. If denied, the applicant is notified in writing of the decision. A copy of the letter is placed in the individual's file along with all appeal documents. 4) An individual has the right to resubmit an appeal to the committee.
- g. The PDS Appeal Committee consists of the Professional Development Coordinator, a CCR & R PDS, the ECP Director, and one other board

member. The appeal process may take up to six weeks to complete. Each appeal is considered on a case-by-case basis.

- h. All grievances or complaints about ECP services or approved training shall be referred to the ECP Director who will request the complaint be sent via email or postal mail in writing. The director will determine a course of action in consultation with appropriate ECP staff, funders, MSU staff, and Career Development Advisory Board members. If concern merits further consideration with larger policy implications, the ECP Director will place it on the agenda for the next Career Development Advisory Board Meeting. The director will respond in writing within six weeks of the initial written communication about the concern to the complainant. All complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with in a confidential manner. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct will be utilized in the decision making process.

11. Input from Participants, Stakeholders and Others

- a. In order to assure that the ECP's services are responsive to participants and agency partners in Montana, the ECP recognizes the critical role they have in the process of designing, implementing, delivering, and evaluating services. Any participant or partner may provide feedback to the ECP Director, staff, or to any member of the Career Development Advisory Board at any time through phone calls, email or in person. All such reports will be shared with the director and addressed appropriately and in a confidential manner.
- b. All ECP staff will conduct oral and written communication with the public, partners and stakeholders with the utmost respect and courtesy at all times. The ECP staff may refer an individual to the ECP Director for assistance at any time for follow-up.
- c. All Career Development Advisory Board meetings are open to the public.

12. Quality Control

- a. The ECP works to maintain and strive for high levels of excellence, ethics and integrity in all of its functions. This depends on all staff being diligent and committed to accuracy, confidentiality and ethical practices. The ECP system allows users to enter all information requested in the Registry and/or Training Approval Application. Only ECP staff can verify data. The database tracks which staff verifies data based on log in credentials.
- b. Ensuring consistent quality data entry is a priority for the ECP. All data entry staff must check for data entry accuracy before advancing to the next screen. The best time to catch errors is during the initial data entry before "closing" a form.

- c. A new data entry staff will have every file checked for accuracy by the ECP Program Manager. As the data entry staff person achieves levels of accuracy as required based on the feedback from the reviewer, every third, fifth, or tenth file is selected for review. The only acceptable rate of staff data entry error is zero errors. If any errors are found the data entry staff will return to having every file reviewed. Once ten files have been reviewed with no errors, reviews will go back up to every third and continue as above.
- d. Tracking staff data entry errors will be done on an excel spreadsheet and stored on the main drive of the ECP system (P: drive). The ECP Program Manager will review files completed by the ECP Program Assistant. Each file completed by the assistant will be placed in the review box for the Program Manager. The Program Assistant will review all training rosters that are entered by the Student Assistant for accuracy. ECP Director will review a random sample of training approval application each month for accuracy. A query will be performed to note the number of approved trainings for the month and the ECP Director will select 10% to review. The only acceptable rate of staff data entry error is zero errors. If any errors are found the staff will return to having every file reviewed. Errors will be corrected with both the reviewer and initial data entry staff to help prevent errors in the future. All ECP reviews must record their findings in the error spreadsheet located in the P:Drive, Office Management, Error Spreadsheet. The Director will review the error spreadsheet on the last Thursday of every month. Consequences of continual data entry error include corrective action and possible job loss if data error continues after corrective action.
- e. Career Development Advisory Board recommends that the Knowledge Base be reviewed for updates and revisions every five years. It was first published in 1998 (blueberry cover) and underwent major revisions in 2003 (seisal cover). In January 2008 (lime green cover) the introduction was slightly revised and specific criteria in content areas were bolded to accompany the BEST curriculum for family and group child care entry level training provided by CCR&R agencies.
- f. The Career Development Advisory Board recommended that the Career Path be reviewed for updates and revisions every five years. It was adopted in 1997 and revised in 2002 when we added the MT Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship to Level 4 and an unrelated Bachelor's degree with 20 credits in early childhood to Level 5. The Career Path was updated again in 2008 to reflect changes to a new Level 7 that recognizes a bachelors' degree in early childhood education.

Practitioner Registry: Application Processes

13. General Practitioner Registry Application Information

- a. If a paper application is received it is date stamped in the top right corner. ECP encourages all participants to complete the online application and staff are available for technical assistance to all applicants. Paper applications are only sent out upon request. Paper applications have required fields identical to the online application for submittal except for the requirement of an email address because some people in MT do not have access to the internet or a computer. Upon receipt of the application in the ECP office, the ECP staff enter the required personal information into the database.
- b. With the online application, all required fields must be completed before the applicant can “submit” their application. Required fields are noted with an asterisk and the database will not allow a participant to advance to the next page without all required fields completed. All required fields are in accordance with the Best Practices of The National Registry Alliance.
- c. All text data fields are formatted when data are reported or exported with the first letter capitalized and subsequent letters are lower case, no fields will be in all lower case.
- d. Required documentation to complete the enrollment process is date stamped in the top right corner of the document. Fax and emails are printed and checked for a received date prior to filing.
- e. Participants may update their application at any time, except when they are in the “submit”, “finalize”, “hold”, or “print” status. Renewals are completed annually to remain in “current” status. Participants can “submit” their renewal application up to two months in advance of their expiration date and any time thereafter. The ECP Program Assistant and Program Manger enter and update for the Practitioner Registry. The participant can log-in to their account at any time (except when their application is in the “submit”, “finalize”, “hold”, or “print” status) and update their information. Renewals are completed annually to remain in the “current” status.
- f. If the participant renews early with a complete application, their renewal date will change to the end of the month of the completed application.

- g. If a participant renews and completes their application during their renewal month, their renewal date will remain the same.
- h. If a participant renews past six months of their renewal date, they become an initial application, lose their longevity diamonds on their certificate, and must pay the late renewal fee of \$10.00.
- i. When payment is received name of participant is written in the memo section of the check and the check is entered into the online database, receipt of payment is sent to participant. This process is done on the day payment is received.
- j. Online payment is available and the database stores payment information. Payments are automatically deposited in the appropriate ECP account.
- k. Participants can update their application at any time and send/email a written request to ECP anytime during the year to review their file, if they believe they have met the requirements to qualify for a higher level. A new certificate will be mailed to the participant. A participant can request in writing that a review of their application be completed to see if they qualify for a higher level on the Career Path. The system identifies who updated the application and the date and time of the last update.
- l. Online Enrollment Process Summary: Participants go to our website www.mtecp.org and sign into their application with their ID and password. If they do not have an ID or password or have forgotten the information the computer system will prompt them through the steps to retrieve this information. Once they have signed in the computer system leads them through Personal, Education, Employment, Professional Membership and Professional Contributions screens of the database. Once they have completed all the screens to the best of their knowledge the system will ask if they are ready to submit their application. Both before and after they submit they receive information on required documentation that they will need to send to the ECP to complete the application process.

14. Registry File Set-Up Process

- a. Open the database and click on “Practitioners”.
- b. Search for the person using first and last name. If a duplicate record is found, merge the records and “lock” the invalid record(s).
- c. If the participant has never applied to the Registry, start a new manila file for participant. Write first and last name on tab of folder. Write ID# on front right corner of file. The ECP database assigns each participant a unique ID number that is stored in the database. This is a random number and not the individual’s social security number.

- d. Search for the person using Registry ID number and/or last five of social security number and birth date. This is done for every participant. If there is more than one record, verify that each record is for a unique participant by looking at birth date and last five digits of SSN and address. If all are different, participant is unique. If any similarities are found, ECP staff must investigate duplicate records to see if they are for the same person. This can be done by contacting the participant to verify information. If a duplicate record is found, ECP staff will merge the records and “lock” the invalid record(s). If the participant has previously applied to the Registry, find their file in the file cabinet and add the new paperwork to the front of their file.
- e. Add a green “Practitioner Registry Application Checklist” (1/4 page) to front of file for all initial applications. For renewals, add a pink “Practitioner Registry Renewal Tracking Form” (full page) to front of file. Complete Name and Received date on checklists. The ECP staff must sign his/her initials in the designated space next to each item checked.
- f. Review the entire application and check for the required documentation. If the document is present, check the “verify” box next to the item. If the document is not present, do not verify and the item will remain “unverified”. Only current credentials will be recorded in the database. Any expired credentials will be “deleted” from the database.

15. Education Review Process

- a. Click on the “Education” tab and verify information. All files with transcripts must be evaluated for institutions attended, degrees awarded, and to determine the number of approved credits in the following areas: Early Childhood (ECE), Business Administration, School Age, Youth Development and Special Education.
- b. The number of ECE credits will determine the person’s level on the Career Path.
- c. A sum total of all college credits from regionally accredited institutions will be recorded in the database. Each degree awarded is entered separately in the database.
- d. ECP staff will select the “verified” box next to each entry after the verification process as follows has been completed. All college credits must be granted by a college or university that has been accredited by one of the six regional accrediting bodies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Accreditation is verified at <http://ope.edu/gov/accreditation/>. By the ECP Program Manger who checks every college by going to the website, typing in the name of the

college and submitting. The website will generate a page of accrediting bodies, if any, have accredited the college. There are a wide variety of accrediting organization in the United States. The ECP recognizes regional accreditation by one of the following: Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges which are all recognized by the US Department of Education. Foreign transcript review for high school and college must be converted to English for acceptance and review. Foreign college transcripts must be reviewed by The National Association of Credential Evaluation Services and the expense of the applicant prior to acceptance of the ECP. Courses obtained at non-accredited higher education institutions will not be recorded unless approved as transfer credits by a regionally accredited college or university. Participants may unknowingly and therefore unintentionally, misrepresent degrees earned when submitting transcripts or grade reports.

- e. Participants may unknowingly and therefore unintentionally, misrepresent degrees earned when submitting transcripts or grade reports from “diploma mills”. The ECP considers the company or entity offering such degrees to be fraudulent. The ECP will inform the applicant in writing that the credits or degree from non-regionally accredited schools will not be accepted on The Montana Practitioner Registry
- f. Courses from non-regionally accredited institutions will not be entered into the system and the participant will be notified that the non-accredited coursework is not recognized by email. The email will be printed off and added to the applicants file.
- g. For Levels I and II on the Career Path a high school diploma or GED is required. The high school must be an accredited high school. The following website will be used to determine high school accreditation: <http://www.boisestate.edu/naas/links/>. On this page, click at the top of the page on Schools for high schools in the Northwest Region. For other regions, click on the specific region in which the state is located. MSU Admissions will not accept a high school diploma unless the high school has been accredited by one of the regional accrediting bodies or through the State Department of Education for the state issuing the diploma. If the school is not accredited by either one of those entities, then the student must have a GED before being admitted to MSU. The ECP will use this policy for verifying high school diploma and/or GED for The Registry.
- h. When reviewing a college transcript, record credits by identifying them as early childhood education (EC), business (B), school-age (SA), youth development (YD), or special education (SE) next to each relevant course.

A “Q” or “S” indicates whether the course was completed for quarter or semester credits. The college’s website will be utilized in making this determination.

- i. Credits will be sum totaled and recorded in the database as recommended by The National Registry Alliance Best Practices document. Credits are totaled by institution if a degree is not earned. Credits are totaled by institution where the degree was granted, this total includes all credits transferred from other institutions. All college credits can be summed in a custom data report. Additional information is not reviewed unless the applicant requests a registry appeal in writing.
- j. College credits are reviewed based upon the nomenclature of the college course and a list of courses approved by the Montana Early Care and Education Consortium for Early Childhood credit designation. School Age, Business, Youth Development and Special Education course credits are also based upon nomenclature and board recommendations. Example: EC245 is an Early Childhood course, BUS345 is a business course, EDU235 is a school age course. ECP board and Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium approved a list of specific classes that count for Early Childhood that may not contain EC in the prefix. Program Manager and Director of ECP work together to determine courses that count in specific Knowledge Base content areas. The Montana University System (MUS) is in the final stages of common course numbering for all fields of study. The ECP has participated in this process and will utilize the ECE common course numbers to identify specific credits to record. The college credits are categorized on a credit count form that records early childhood credits in each of the MT’s core competency (Knowledge Base) content areas.
- k. If two degrees are awarded on the same day, enter all the credits with the higher degree. Enter the lower degree with date, the name of institution, degree name and major. If the transcript shows a double major, list the first major, then a slash, and the second major.
- l. If transcript does not list major, the field shall be listed as “unknown.”
- m. Acceptable documentation includes official, unofficial and photocopy transcripts and grade reports and must have participant’s full name and the institution name identified. This does NOT include copies of class schedules. Official name of the Higher Education Institution must be listed on documentation and will be entered exactly as listed into database. Credit is assigned to degree awarding institution listed on documentation.
- n. If transfer credit is shown on a transcript, but no courses are listed, count only the total college credit hours and request the institution’s transcript

from the applicant so that it may be reviewed for EC, SA, B, YD and SE credit.

- o. College course work is calculated whereby one semester credit equals 15 hours of approved training. Quarter credits are converted to semester credits by dividing the total number of quarter credits by 1.5. In the case of fractions of credits, total credits are rounded up or down.
- p. The ECP has identified for state licensing, courses that count for the eight hours of required training. There are a broader range of college courses that count for licensing, than those that count for the Registry required annual renewal hours. Credits that count for the Practitioner Registry required training hours are more specifically related to early childhood education. Practitioners may contact the ECP Director to check which credits will count for state licensing and/or The Registry.
- q. If a participant is working towards an Early Childhood degree, then general education classes count toward their Practitioner Registry renewal hours. These classes will not be added to their Professional Development Record.
- r. If a participant is taking related college courses, such as psychology, sociology, education, these credits will count for Pre-Professional or Level 1 training requirements. Unrelated credits, such as history and science will not count for Pre-Professional or Level 1 training requirements.
- s. Verification of 300 hours of supervised teaching experience must be verified with a combination of college transcripts for student teaching and grade level, and number of hours (or credits). Written verification from an individual who is a Level 6 or higher on the Career Path and supervised the applicant will also suffice.
- t. The ECP encourages all practitioners with questions about college course work to contact the ECP for assistance.
- u. Acceptable documentation for other credential certificates includes copies of certificates that include number of hours, date completed, credential title and sponsor signature and date.
- v. If a credential or certification has an expiration date it is recorded in the system. If a credential/certification does not have an expiration date, it is not a required field in the system.

16. First Aid/CPR

- a. Non-direct care practitioners such as individuals working in support agency roles are exempt from the requirements for current First Aid/CPR as approved by the Career Development Advisory in October 2006. Only the current First Aid and CPR certification will be kept in the database.

17. Longevity Clause

- a. 5.1 If a participant allows their current Practitioner Registry status to lapse, they may receive the Longevity Clause Level 3 one additional time. ECP staff will make a note in their file and also send them a letter stating this policy.
- b. If they lapse again they would have to meet the requirements of Level 3 to achieve that level again.

18. Employment

- a. Employment must be verified by ECP staff. To verify employment, ECP staff will review a written letter/form from supervisor stating start date, position title, age group participant works with, number of hours worked per week and months worked per year. For a family or group child care home a copy of their child care license will be verification of employment. If a participant has more than one place of employment in early childhood, each employment will be recorded and verified separately. Past employment will also be recorded and verified if requested.
- b. The database will automatically calculate work experience hours based on the verified employment records. This will help determine what level a participant qualifies for on the Career Path.
- c. The unique state licensing program number with the official legal name, type of facility, address is transferred on a weekly basis from the state licensing database. The unique program (facility number) is created on a system table level on a state system (CCUBS) level. Each number is incremented by SQL itself and duplicated numbers are impossible to create. The unique facility number is generated by CCUBS in a process that is proprietary to the Montana regulated child care data warehouse. It is referred to as the PV#.
- d. Beale and FIPS codes are stored in a utility table that is related to the county code of each program.
- e. The ECP database automatically assigns unique program numbers as program directors/administrators/owners create a Program Profile in the ECP database. This is not the program/facility (PV#) license number. Before a Program may create a Program Profile it must be reviewed and accepted by the ECP Professional Development Coordinator who has verified it as a unique program/organization that has not previously

opened an account with the ECP. This is done by reviewing the list of currently verified program/organizations. If a similar program name is found, the ECP will contact the program and identify the correct entry by title. This process is complete for every program organization establishing an account with the ECP.

- f. The ECP receives a weekly file that is imported from the State of MT CCUBS database through an unattended, secure FTP process. There is no user interface available for editing or adding this information. The CCUBS records are matched with Registry records using the licensing Provider Number (PV#) and the licensing Person number (PS#). When new records are added, a systems level Primary key is generated which serves as the Program or Person ID. The unique and primary key constraints both provide a guarantee for uniqueness for a column or set of columns with MS SQL. A primary key constraint automatically has a unique constraint defined on it. The entire CCUBS data set is sent each week so there is no possibility of losing records through a lost connection or failure of the process at either end.
- g. The transfer from the state database indicates three types: center, group and family child care.

19. Professional Organization Membership

- a. Professional Organization Membership will be verified by ECP staff by reviewing a copy of the individual's membership card or notification from the organization with the expiration date listed.
- b. Only the current Professional Membership will be kept on file in the ECP database.

20. Professional Contributions

- a. Professional Contributions are automatically verified by ECP staff.
- b. Only volunteer Professional Contributions made in the past year will be kept in the ECP database.

21. Finalizing Registry Application

- a. A thorough review by ECP staff for data entry accuracy is conducted before placing the application in the "finalize" status. The best time to catch errors is during the initial data entry.
- b. Enter the "Application Received Date" as the date stamped on materials submitted. Change the status from "submitted" to "finalize". ECP staff must enter initials and date of this change.

- c. Click on “calculate”. When a participant submits their renewal online the database calculates their renewal date based on their submitted date. If they fail to complete the renewal process within the month of their submitted date, ECP staff will manually change renewal date to the last day of the closest month (anything dated on the 15th of the month or earlier receives the last day of the previous month as their certificate date.)
- d. Click on “accept” or “override” for the calculation determined by the database. A participant who wishes to move down to a lower level must request this in writing and include the reason for this request. Otherwise they will remain “incomplete” until the requirements for their current level have been met. A copy of their written request will be filed in their file.
- e. The database will automatically place the participant in the “print” status. Enter date and ECP initials on green tracking form. Place file in “To Be Printed” office file organizer based on whether it is an initial or renewal application.
- f. Printing of certificates and materials are batched every Friday and materials are sent out in the mail the following Monday. A participant will also receive an “Extra Mile” certificate if they complete more than 40 hours of training in the past year. If a holiday falls on a Friday, the ECP will process prior to Friday.
- g. Practitioners must allow up to 6-8 weeks from the time the ECP receives all hard copy documentation in the office to complete processing the application and printing the certificate. This information is published on the initial “Request for Information” email that is generated from the online system upon submittal of an application. It is also published on the paper application and ECP website. Additional time needs to be considered to allow for postal service delivery.
- h. Special requests for adjustment to processing time are handled on a case-by-case basis by the Director of the ECP. This might include a complete facility staff report for the QRIS program, any NAEYC Accreditation, and/or a data request from ECP funders, legislature, or state partners.
- i. The ECP will not fax copies of Registry Certificates under any circumstance.

22. Incomplete Application Process

- a. ECP staff change the status from “submitted” to “incomplete” for applications that require further documentation. ECP staff will enter their initials and date of this change. A message will be sent to the individual’s email listed in the database specifically addressing what materials must be submitted to the ECP office to complete their application. Before sending

email request for information to the participant, ECP staff will review all sections of the application so that all requests can be made at the same time. All written communication is printed and included in the applicant's file. Applications marked as "incomplete" stay that way until all requested documentation has been received, reviewed, processed and finalized. Applicants receive email notification of all necessary documentation required to complete the application process. When documents are received they are recorded as verified in the database. Quarterly, ECP query all incomplete applications and send a reminder via email that the ECP is still waiting to receive additional documentation to complete their Registry application and to contact ECP for assistance in doing so.

- b. An application may be put on "hold" if the participant is seeking an appeal or the file has been forwarded to the ECP Director for further review. If an application is put in the "hold" status, a note will be made in the memo section of the online file noting when this occurred, why, and initialed by the ECP staff.

23. Application Fees and Renewal Information

- a. The initial application fee is \$25.00 payable online to the ECP or with a check or money order. The annual renewal application fee is \$10.00. The late renewal application fee is \$25.00
- b. Renewal packets are mailed out two months prior to the Practitioner Registry certificate renewal date. A coversheet will be included with each renewal packet with information about what is needed and where and when to send the information. ECP requires that participant's renew and update their application annually to remain current.
- c. If an individual does not renew, they receive a renewal postcard reminder 30 days past their renewal date. They are given an additional 30 days to renew for the \$10.00 fee. They have a total of 60 days to renew after their certificate renewal date without being charged the late fee. If they do not renew within the 60 days after their renewal date, they will be charged the \$25.00 late renewal fee. If they have not renewed within 6 months after their renewal date, their next application will be treated as an initial application and they lose their longevity diamonds on their certificate.
- d. A duplicate certificate fee is \$5.00 and must be received prior to printing and mailing the duplicate.
- e. All fees are non-refundable.
- f. Door prize certificates may be awarded by ECP staff during training or conferences. The door prize may be redeemed for one initial application fee or three renewal fees. Only the original door prize certificate will be

accepted and the original will be kept in the applicant's folder. Only the participant listed on the door prize may redeem.

24. Status Definitions in Database

- a. **Unregistered:** Individuals that have been added by ECP or designated CCR&R agency staff when entering attendance sheets. These records are created because participants are not in the ECP system at the current time.
- b. **State:** Individuals that have been retrieved from the state database but have not yet created an account in the ECP system.
- c. **New:** Individuals who have created an account in the ECP system and received an ID and Password, but have not started the application process.
- d. **Open:** Individuals who obtain an ID and Password in the system and then sign in. This means the file is open for edits and they may submit a registry application at any time.
- e. **Submitted:** Individuals who have completed the application process and submitted their application for review.
- f. **Current:** Individuals who have submitted their registry application and submitted all the correct documentation to receive their certificate. Their Practitioner Registry certificate is current.
- g. **Hold:** Individuals are put into this status only by ECP staff primarily when application is under review by Director or proceeding with an appeal.
- h. **Incomplete:** Individuals who have not submitted all sufficient documentation to meet the criteria for The Registry.
- i. **Expired:** Individuals who's Registry status has expired past the date printed on their registry certificate. This status change is done automatically by the database.
- j. **Finalize:** Submitted applications are put into this status by ECP staff when the application is complete and the level is ready to be calculated.
- k. **Print:** After the application has been finalized and the level is calculated the status automatically turns to "print" to alert ECP that their certificate and other materials are ready to be printed.
- l. **Inactive:** Individuals that were marked as inactive in the previous ECP registry database (pre-March 2009).

- m. Locked: Individual records that have been mistakenly duplicated are placed in the “locked” status by ECP staff, therefore only ECP staff may access them.

Training Approval and Records System

25. Training Approval

- a. A training sponsor must complete an online training approval application for their training to be reviewed and approved prior to the event occurring.
- b. Any event that has already occurred will not be approved.
- c. ECP staff log into the database and click on “training events”. These are the events that are currently seeking approval.
- d. The ECP staff will then click on the title of the training and review content, trainer, objectives, timeline and all other required fields. Based on the review of the application, the ECP staff will either approve or deny the training event. Training will be approved/reviewed within 10 business days of the submitted date.
- e. If the training is approved an automatic email will be sent to the sponsor notifying them of the approval. The sponsor will then be able to log in to the online system and print off the training certificates, attendance sheet and a sample evaluation form for the approved event.
- f. If a training is denied, the ECP sends an email to the sponsor explaining why the training was denied and what action can be taken to have the event approved.
- g. The two hours of New Provider Orientation (NPO) offered by CCR&R agencies in combination with the QAD Licensing Orientation which is 2.5 hours will count for the first year at the Pre-Professional Level toward the total of eight required hours. All CCR & R agencies must submit a training approval application for the two hour state required NPO.
- h. Individuals may pursue training that has not been approved through the ECP system. This type of training may be approved on a case-by-case basis with submission of the Individual Request for Training Approval form available on the ECP website. These forms must be signed by the instructor to verify hours or submitted with a certificate of completion. An agenda or program must be submitted to verify total hours and content. Once approved, those events are added to the individual’s Professional Development Record (PDR). Individual Request for Training Approval will not be entered on a practitioner’s PDR if it was taken more than one

year prior to receipt in the ECP office ECP encourages practitioner's to submit these requests within three months of the training event. Original Individual Request forms are sent back to the individual. A copy of the form is filed in the participant's file if they are on the Practitioner Registry. If they are not on The Registry the copy is filed in the Individual Request for Training notebook by last name and kept on file for five years, but kept indefinitely in the database for that individual on their Professional Development Record.

- i. In the case of an approved event being cancelled, the sponsor must notify ECP. ECP staff will then change the status of the event to "cancelled". If there are any changes to an event the sponsor must also contact ECP in writing so ECP can review/update the change and establish if the training will still be approved. Such changes include date, trainer, location, etc.
- j. ECP will only accept the official ECP attendance sheet. Any modified or sponsor-created attendance sheets will be sent back to the sponsor. Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies are the only sponsors granted access to enter attendance sheets into the database. All other attendance sheets must be sent to ECP for data entry. Only Child Care Resource and Referral Agency designated staff may enter rosters online into the ECP database. The designated staff are only allowed to enter rosters for their agency and this access is controlled by the online database system. When ECP staff enter rosters or any other information into the online database they record their initials and the date the information was entered. This information is noted on the paper verification that is sent to the office and stored in the appropriate file.
- k. Attendance for each training event is entered online into the ECP database by the designated CCR&R staff. Events sponsored by organizations other than CCR&R's must return their attendance sheets/rosters to the ECP for data entry within 10 business days of the event. Data entry is completed into the ECP system within 5 business days of receipt. The training event ID is found in the database and linked to the individuals PS number or unique identifier that is listed on the attendance sheet.
- l. ECP files every attendance sheet by location of training event, in order by training event number. Attendance sheets are kept in the ECP office for two years at which time they are destroyed.
- m. If a complaint about an approved training event is made via phone to an ECP staff member, they should be referred to the ECP Director. The director shall request the complaint be filed in writing. After receipt of the written complaint, the director will further assess the matter, consult with staff and board members as necessary, contact the training sponsor and proceed accordingly. The complainant shall receive a letter stating the

course of action taken. All complaints and accompanying documentation shall be filed in the ECP office training approval file cabinet, file COMPLAINTS or electronic file career development/training approval/complaints.

- n. State licensed child care centers are required by the CACFP to complete five hours of annual training. As of July 2008, all five of those hours will be approved through ECP system and will count for annual training hours for directors. State registered family and group child care homes are required by the CACFP to complete four hours of annual training which may be used for licensing, Professional Development Incentive Awards (PDIAs) and The Practitioner Registry.
- o. Programs such as preschools, licensed child care centers and Head Start and Early Head Start programs may provide in-service training that will count for annual training hours for state licensing, The Practitioner Registry and PDIAs if approved by the ECP. The ECP must check with the local licensor by email and have that licensor verify that the program has not undergone any corrective action in the past year. The program must submit a Training Approval application for review.
- p. Distance learning training must be approved by the ECP prior to enrollment. The following distance learning training options are approved in Montana: Child Care Resources on-line training (www.childcaretraining.org), correspondence courses offered through CCR&R agencies and Training Basics. They are posted on the Statewide Training Calendar.
- q. When the ECP receives a request for distance learning training approval, the sponsor is referred to the ECP website for the Distance Learning Training Approval Application. The ECP receives and reviews the application utilizing criteria established by the board. The ECP coordinates the review committee conference call, if necessary for further discussion or ECP notifies sponsor in writing if not approved in MT with explanation of why. ECP notifies CCR&R's and licensors of decision through email distribution list and quarterly news sheet if new distance learning training is approved. It is also posted on the ECP website.

26. Training Requirements and Professional Development Records

- a. All state licensed and registered child care staff who directly work with children for 160 hours or more/year must complete a minimum of 8 hours of approved training each year. Approval is granted through the ECP's Training Approval and Records System. Directors of licensed child care centers must complete 15 hours of approved training annually as per state child care regulations.

- b. The ECP also approves distance learning training options which are reviewed and posted on the ECP website upon approval.
- c. If an individual is active on the Practitioner Registry, they must complete a total of 23 hours of approved training annually at all levels on the Career Path except for the Pre-Professional Level (which requires only 8 hours of annual training).
- d. Individuals not working in a licensed facility must complete at least 15 hours of approved training annually at all levels on the Career Path except for the Pre-Professional Level which requires 8 hours.
- e. Professional Development Records for all state licensed/registered child care staff and directors and Practitioner Registry participants are available through the ECP website and may be accessed by the state generated PS number or the individual's unique identifier.
- f. The ECP does not accept non-verified education, credentials or training.
- g. Individuals on the Practitioner Registry can enter training attendance on their record. In order for the training to be "verified" the participant must send the ECP a copy of their certificate. This certificate must be an ECP generated certificate. When the ECP receives a copy of the certificate, ECP will go into the record and "verify" attendance. The ECP accepts only copies of training certificates. Practitioners are encouraged to keep originals in their professional file. Due to our online database a participant cannot be entered twice for the same training. This process allows participants to enter their own training as far back as they can verify with certificates. ECP staff only adds training/college coursework not listed on a participant's Professional Development Record from the time they are "current" on the Practitioner Registry.
- h. Individuals may not receive training hours for "study" time.

Professional Development Specialist (PDS): Application Processes

27. PDS Approval Process

- a. Individuals must be current on The Practitioner Registry prior to applying to become an approved PDS. Specific Career Path levels, adult learning course work and training experience are required for each of the three PDS levels.
- b. Once submitted, the ECP notifies the individual with an electronic letter which outlines what documentation is necessary to complete the PDS/Trainer application process. The Code of Ethical Conduct for Adult Educators, the Montana Agreement, and the Recommendation Checklist are attached for signatures and references to be returned to the ECP.
- c. The ECP maintains a checklist to document receipt of necessary paperwork for each applicant. Applicants may request in writing that the ECP print out a list of training they have facilitated to verify their training experience. This is an administrative function of the ECP and applicants are notified of this option in the electronic letter.
- d. Upon receipt of all necessary documents and references, the ECP prints a certificate which indicates the PDS level awarded and the date of renewal on The Practitioner Registry. The completed PDS paperwork and checklist are filed in their Registry file.
- e. Renewal PDSs are identified by ECP staff when an individual renews on The Registry. A log of those individuals who need to renew for PDS is kept by the aforementioned ECP staff. The Professional Development Coordinator retrieves the log on a weekly basis for processing.
- f. The PDS Renewal Log includes the first and last name, date of renewal and PDS level.
- g. Specialty Trainers are individuals offering training to early childhood professionals whose expertise is in a different field, such as an accountant, firefighter, counselor, nurse, etc. They must be named on the trainer section of the Training Approval application where they must specify their title and organization.
- h. An Oversight Trainer is a PDS II or III who is accountable for the quality assurance of the training event. The ECP collects the Oversight Trainer's email address on the Training Approval application and will do random

checks to assure that they are overseeing the PDS I. The Oversight Trainer will be responsible for working with the PDS I as they prepare for the training, write learning objectives, identify content and Knowledge Base areas to be addressed, help to create a format and methods to be used, and process the evaluations and offer feedback to the PDS I. They may attend the event.

- i. Training Approval applications require that a training sponsor identify an approved PDS or Specialty Trainer for each event. An Oversight Trainer and their email must be identified for a PDS I.
- j. If a Training Approval application is submitted without an approved PDS or Specialty Trainer, an automatic email is generated asking for the sponsor to contact the ECP for further information.
- k. Early childhood higher education faculty are exempt from the PDS requirements, but must submit a resume to the ECP which will be kept on file.

Data Storage, Database Maintenance, and Data Sharing Policies and Procedures

28. Backup

- a. Full server backups are performed on a weekly basis and differential backups are performed daily.
- b. Server backups are stored on-site for a period of two weeks and restore turnaround time is approximately four hours.
- c. Registry SQL databases are fully backed up daily. Five days of backups are retained on the server and can be restored within an hour. Differential backups are performed every four hours.
- d. These full SQL database backups can also be made available via an FTP login and can be downloaded and retained for as long as necessary.
- e. SQL Server Databases are also backed up to tape on a weekly basis with differential backups performed daily. These backups are also stored on-site for a period of two weeks and restore turnaround time is approximately four hours.
- f. All on-site backups are also stored off-site for a period of four weeks. Turnaround time for restoring from an off-site backup is 48 hours maximum.
- g. In the event of a catastrophic event at the data center, the off-site backups will be shipped within 48 hours to a designated location. New servers will be brought online and configured during this timeframe. New IP Addresses will be communicated to all customers.
- h. The time necessary to request and receive backups, configure servers, restore data, and communicate and implement required DNS changes should be no more than 5 business days.
- i. When a catastrophic event occurs involving physical documents used in prior verification processes: only items verified in electronic data are considered valid, all items unverified in electronic data must be verified by submitting new copies of the related documents. In the event of a catastrophic event whereby physical files are fully or partially destroyed, the ECP is not liable for the loss of documents. We encourage individuals to send copies of verification documents so they may keep the originals in their own file. If a catastrophic event occurs, the ECP would be

responsible for accessing the loss of documents and notifying individuals of needed replacement documentation. This would be done through email or by postal mail if necessary.

- j. Staff will follow these procedures below should it be determined that one or more of these catastrophic events has occurred: The ECP database has been destroyed, compromised or corrupted, the ECP application software has been destroyed, compromised or corrupted. Contact all the following: ECP Director, ECP Program Manger and Systems Development Director. The Systems Development Director will contact NewWorldNow. If the Systems Development Director is not available, any one of the above ECP staff are authorized to Contact NewWorldNow. If it is determined that data cannot be restored from ECP backup files, NewWorldNow staff will initiate the process for authorizing restoration from RackSpace redundant backup systems. In addition to RackSpace backup routines described in the Registry Application Hosting, all ECP data is back up nightly on Registry Consortium shared servers.

29. Storage

- a. Storage of paper documentation for the Registry is stored at the ECP office. File cabinets are all locked at the end the day, as is the office. All computers must be logged off or shut down at the end of each day. All hardcopy participant files must be kept and stored at the ECP office and will not be taken off-site. All verification in paper version is stored on-site for a minimum of five years.
- b. Electronic documentation is printed and stored in the individual's file, and then deleted.
- c. Physical files are placed in a locked file cabinet at the end of each day as they move through the process to print status. After the process is completed they are returned to that locked file cabinet where they are retrieved to be filed alphabetically in our locked practitioner file cabinets. ECP staff are trained on this procedure.
- d. Training Attendance rosters and Individual Requests for Training Approval forms will be destroyed after 5 years. All information in individual's registry hard copy files are stored indefinitely. Expired hard copy files are stored in locked file cabinets in the ECP storage room.
- e. When the ECP transfers data, all data will be double blind coded. All web based data transactions are SSL encrypted and data exchange between partners is via FT via SSL/TLS.

30. Maintenance

- a. All data center, hardware and network management is done by Rackspace from their data center in Texas. Only authorized data center personnel are granted access credentials to the data center. No one else can enter the production area of the data center without prior clearance and an appropriate escort. Every data center employee undergoes multiple background security checks before they are hired. Keycard protocols, biometric scanning protocols and round-the-clock interior and exterior surveillance monitor access to the data center.
- b. Registry application web servers including transfer of data electronically are protected from network intrusion via a hardware firewall using Cisco Pix 501 appliances.

