

Child Care & Early Education **RESEARCH CONNECTIONS**

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Research Connections Child Care & Early Education Glossary



The child care & early education glossary defines terms used to describe aspects of child care and early education practice and policy.

21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Program

A federally funded grant program, originally authorized by Congress in 1994 through the **ESEA**, that supports states to create community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities, educational services, and extracurricular activities to children during afterschool hours. The program is designed to help low-income students from low-performing school districts to meet state and local standards in core academic subjects.

Accessibility

Refers to the availability of child care when and where a family needs it. **See related: Child Care Access; Child Care Availability.**

Accommodation

Refers to adjustments or adaptations made in standards and assessment tools to allow children with **Special Needs** or **English-Language Learners** to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Accommodations help provide children with equal access to education by meeting the child's individual learning needs and capabilities. For example, a test could be adapted for a child with attention issues by granting extra time or could be administered to a non-English speaker in the child's native language. Accommodation addresses how the child is expected to learn and demonstrate learning, not what a child is expected to learn. **Compare with: Modification.**

Accreditation

A process through which child care programs voluntarily meet specific standards to receive endorsement from a professional agency. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC) are among the organizations that offer accreditation programs for child care.

Adult-Child Ratio

Refers to the number of qualified adult caregivers relative to the number of children in a child care program. In determining the regulatory adult-to-child ratio, the ages of children served are also considered. In high **Quality** programs, there is typically a low adult-child/staff-child ratio.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

Refers to potentially traumatic events that can have a negative, lasting effect on an individual's health and well-being. Adverse childhood experiences can include physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to the death or incarceration of a parent or guardian.

Affordability

The degree to which the price of child care is a reasonable or feasible family expense. States maintain different definitions of "affordable" child care, taking various factors into consideration, such as family income, child care **Market Rates**, and **Subsidy** acceptance, among others.

After-School Program

Programs serving school age children and older when they are not in school. Sometimes

called **Out-of-School Time (OST)** programs, after school programs may provide a broad range of services and supports such as mentoring, academic support, youth development, arts, sports and other forms of recreation.

American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN)

A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

Approaches to Learning

Refers to the ways in which children learn, including children's openness and curiosity to tasks and challenges, task persistence, imagination, attentiveness, and cognitive learning style.

At Risk

A term used to describe children who are considered to have a higher probability of non-optimal **Child Development** and learning. **See related: Risk Factors.**

Attachment

The emotional and psychological bond between a child and adult, typically a parent or caregiver, that contributes to the child's sense of security and safety. It is believed that secure attachment leads to psychological well-being and **Resilience** throughout the child's lifetime and is considered a key predictor of positive **Child Development** and learning.

Best Practices

A term used to denote the "best" ways of delivering services, supports or information to achieve desired outcomes as determined by research or experience. **See related: Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP); Evidence-based Practice.**

Bilingual

Refers to an individual who can speak two languages with similar or equal proficiency. In the U.S., bilingual education refers to instruction given in English, as well as another language, with the goal of attaining proficiency and mastery in both languages. **See related: English Language Learner (ELL); Limited English Speaking/Limited English Proficiency (LEP); Dual Language Learner (DLL).**

Blended Funding

A **Financing Strategy** that combines funding sources to pay for an integrated set of program services to a group of children. With blended funding, costs do not have to be allocated and tracked by the individual funding source. **Compare with: Braided Funding; Layered Funding.**

Braided Funding

A **Financing Strategy** used to coordinate funds from two or more sources to support the total cost of integrated services for individual children. With braided funding, costs must be attributed and tracked by the particular funding stream. Cost allocation methods are required to assure that there are no duplicate funding of service costs and that each funding source is charged its fair share of program and administrative costs. **Compare with: Blended Funding; Layered Funding.**

Career Ladder/Lattice

A metaphor, often accompanied by a pictorial representation, for job or career progression. Career ladders/lattices typically includes descriptions of the required skills, **Credentials** and degrees required to advance one's career or move from one related position to another. **See related: Career Pathway.**

Career Pathway

A progression of educational qualifications, **Credentials** and training that build upon one another and enable early childhood practitioners to advance in their careers. Career pathways can be flexible, with multiple entry and exit points, to allow the **Workforce**, made up of diverse learners and non-traditional students, to acquire the necessary career-related skills and knowledge. Career pathways allow individuals to move along or within a **Career Ladder/Lattice.**

Center Based Child Care

Child care provided in nonresidential group settings, such as within public or private schools, churches, preschools, day care centers, or nursery schools. **See related: Community Cased Child Care/Community Based Organization (CBO).**

Certification (Staff)

The process by which an individual or institution attests to or is shown to have met a prescribed standard or set of standards.

Child Care Access

Refers to the ability for families to find quality **Child Care Arrangements** that satisfy their preferences, with reasonable effort and at an affordable price. **See related: Child Care Availability.**

Child Care Arrangement

Refers to any combination of non-parental child care providers and/or settings that families use for their children, often while family members are at work. Child care arrangements vary widely based on a family's unique needs and circumstances. Arrangements might include: **Center-Based Child Care, Family/home-based Child Care, Informal Child Care**, full-day **Head Start** or **Pre-Kindergarten** programs at local **CBOs, Drop-in Child Care**, etc. Many families will also utilize **After-School Programs** and services so that their child care arrangements can accommodate their work schedules.

Child Care Assistance

Any public or private financial assistance intended to lower the cost of child care for families. **See related: Child Care Subsidy.**

Child Care Availability

Refers to whether **Quality** child care is accessible and available to families at a reasonable cost and using reasonable effort. **See related: Child Care Access.**

Child Care Bureau

See **Office of Child Care.**

Child Care Desert

A geographical area where there is an inadequate supply of high **Quality**, affordable, and accessible child care options.

Child Care Health Consultants (CCHC)

Licensed health professionals with education and experience in child and community health as well as in early care and education. CCHCs have knowledge of resources and regulations and are typically helpful in linking health resources with child care facilities. **See related: Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation.**

Child Care Provider

An organization or individual that provides early care and education services.

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&R)

Local and statewide entities, usually funded by **CCDF**, that provide a range of services to the community, such as guidance and referrals to parents seeking child care; professional development and trainings for early childhood professionals; as well as parenting and other educational resources for families. Some CCR&R agencies also administer child care **Subsidies**.

Child Care Slots

The number of openings that a child care setting has available as dictated by its **Licensed Capacity**. Child care slots may be filled or unfilled.

Child Care Subsidy

A type of **Child Care Assistance** primarily funded by the federal **CCDF** program.

Child Care Supply and Demand

Refers to the total number of **Child Care Slots** available in a given area relative to the aggregate of families' needs and preferences for child care.

Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

The source of discretionary funding for the **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)**. The CCDBG was originally enacted under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990. In 2014, Congress reauthorized the CCDBG for the first time since 1996, and included new laws and requirements related to the quality and availability of CCDF funded child care programs and related activities.

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

A federally funded program that provides block grants to states to subsidize the child care expenses of working parents/families so they can participate in educational or training opportunities. Each state creates its own **CCDF Plan** that is approved and administered by the **Office of Child Care (OCC)** at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The CCDF also funds activities intended to improve the overall **Quality** and supply of child care for families, such as by providing **Technical Assistance** and promoting coordination among early learning and **After-School Programs**.

Child Care and Development Fund Plan (CCDF Plan)

A plan developed by a designated CCDF child care agency in each state, territory, or tribe that

serves as an application for **CCDBG** funds. Plans provide a description of, and assurances about, the grantee's child care programs and services available to eligible families. States must promote public involvement in their CCDF Plan's development/review process and submit their plan to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for review and approval every three years.

Child Development

The process by which children acquire skills in the areas of social, emotional, intellectual, speech and language, and physical development, including fine and gross motor skills. Developmental stages describe the expected, sequential order of gaining skills and competencies that children typically acquire. **See related: Developmental Milestones; Approaches to Learning.**

Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential

A widely earned **Credential** administered by the Council for Professional Recognition.

Child Protective Services (CPS)

An official public agency responsible for receiving and investigating reports of suspected child abuse or neglect and for ensuring that prevention and intervention services are provided.

Coaching

A relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized knowledge and adult learning **Competencies** that is designed to build capacity for or enhance specific professional dispositions, skills and behaviors. Coaching is typically offered to teaching and administrative staff, either by in-house or outside coaches, and focuses on goal-setting and achievement. **See related: Consultation; Technical Assistance.**

Community-Based Child Care/Community-Based Organization (CBO)

A nonprofit organization that provides educational or related services to children and families within their local community. CBOs that provide child care may be associated with faith-based organizations or other nonprofit organizations. CBOs are subject to section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. **See related: Center-based Child Care.**

Competencies [refers to Workforce Knowledge or Core Competencies]

Refers to the range of knowledge and observable skills that early childhood practitioners need to provide effective services to children and families. Competencies, sometimes referred to as "core competencies," are typically linked with states' early learning guidelines and provide a framework for **Professional Development** at various career stages.

Comprehensive Services

An array of coordinated services that meet the holistic needs of children and families enrolled in a given program, from health and developmental screenings to family literacy trainings and parent education.

Consultation

A collaborative, problem-solving process between an external consultant with specific expertise and adult learning **Competencies** and an individual or group. Consultation typically facilitates the assessment and resolution of an issue-specific concern, a program-/organizational-, staff-,

or child-/family-related issue, or addresses a specific topic. **See related: Coaching; Technical Assistance.**

Continuing Education Unit (CEU)

Refers to credits that early childhood professionals earn by demonstrating that they have attended training/**Professional Development** and can understand and apply what they have learned. CEUs are often regarded as a bridge between **In-Service Training** and college credit.

Continuity of Care

Refers to the provision of care to children by consistent caregivers in consistent environments over a period of time to ensure stable and nurturing environments. Research shows that maintaining continuity and limiting transitions in a child's first few years of life promotes the type of deep human connections that young children need for optimal early brain development, emotional regulation, and learning.

Copayment (Co-Pay)

Payment for part of a subsidized service that is the responsibility of parents/family members. The copayment amount may take a family's financial circumstances into consideration.

Cost of Care

The monetary cost of providing early care and education services. Major contributors to the cost of care include staff wages and salaries, benefits, rent, supplies, **Professional Development** and training. The cost of care can be different from the actual price of care charged by the provider.

Credentials

Academic degrees, licenses or certificates awarded to individuals who successfully complete state or national requirements to enter specialized roles in the early childhood **Workforce**. **See related: Certification (Staff).**

Cultural Competence

A term that describes what happens when special knowledge about individuals and groups of people is incorporated into standards, policies, and practices. Cultural competence fosters an appreciation of families and their unique backgrounds and has been shown to increase the quality and effectiveness of services to children.

Curriculum

A written plan that includes goals for children's development and learning; the experiences through which they will achieve the goals; what staff and parents should do to help children achieve the goals; and the materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum.

Developmental Domains

Refers to the five domains of **Child Development**: Physical, the development and growth of the child's body, muscles, and senses; Social, how the child relates, plays and talks to others; Emotional, the child's awareness of self, how the child feels about himself, expression of feelings and how he helps care for himself; Cognitive, the way children think, reason, solve problems, and understand and use language and; Adaptive/Self-help, how children adapt to

their environments. Developmental domains are interrelated; what happens in one domain influences development in the other domains.

Developmental Milestones

A set of functional skills or age-specific tasks that experts agree most children should be able to do within a certain age range. Milestones enable families and professionals to monitor a child's learning, behavior, and development and can signal when there might be a developmental delay or cause for greater concern.

Developmental Outcomes

Describes the condition of a child's developmental health and life trajectory that can be impacted by determinants such as: family income and education level, access to health and child care services, choice of neighborhood, social support networks, and genetics, among others.

Developmental Screening and Assessment

The practice of systematically measuring a child's development across multiple domains and looking for signs of developmental delays. Screening and assessment tools are typically administered by professionals in healthcare, community, or school settings with children and families and can consist of formal questionnaires or checklists that ask targeted questions about a child's development.

Developmentally Appropriate

Practices, behaviors, activities and settings that are adapted to match the age, characteristics and developmental progress of a specific group of children. Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) in early learning settings reflects knowledge of **Child Development** and an understanding of the unique personality, learning style and family background of each child.

Distance Learning

A mode of education and instruction in which teachers and students are not physically present with each other and communicate remotely. Distance education typically takes place online, where teachers and students interact by way of email, video or other means of communication.

Drop in/Short Term Child Care

A **Child Care Arrangement** that families may be able to use one time or while pursuing short term, non-employment related activities. Drop in care arrangements are often found in places like health spas, resort hotels, or other locations where family members are typically on the premises when services are provided or are otherwise accessible. **See related: On Site Child Care.**

Dual Generation Strategies

An approach to stimulating young children's healthy development that includes promoting the capabilities and resources of parents, families or caregivers. These strategies generally link the provision of services for children, such as **Quality** child care, with services for their parents and entire families, such as employment counseling or housing assistance. **See related: Two Generation Programs.**

Dual Language Learners (DLL)

Refers to children under the age of five who have at least one parent or guardian that speaks a language other than English at home and who are mastering their native language while learning English simultaneously. **See related: English Language Learners (ELL); Limited English Speaking/Limited English Proficiency (LEP); Bilingual.**

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

A strategic intervention geared towards building the capacity of early childhood staff, programs, families, and systems to prevent, identify, treat, and reduce the impact of mental health problems among children from birth to age six. In a child-focused consultation, the consultant may facilitate the development of an individualized plan for the child; In a classroom-focused consultation, the consultant may work with the teacher/caregiver to increase the level of Social-Emotional support for all the children in the class through observations, modeling, and sharing of resources and information; In a program-focused consultation, the consultant may help administrators address policies and procedures that benefit all children and adults in the program.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Specialized instruction that is provided by trained early childhood **Special Education** professionals to young children with disabilities in various early childhood settings such as **Preschool**, child care, **Prekindergarten** and **Head Start**, among others. ECSE is mandated by the federal **Part B of the IDEA**.

Early Head Start

A federally funded program that serves low-income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers to support optimal child development while helping parents/families move toward economic independence. EHS programs generally offer the following core services: (1) high **Quality** early education in and out of the home; (2) family support services, home visits and parent education; (3) comprehensive health and mental health services, including services for pregnant and postpartum women; (4) nutrition; (5) child care, and, (6) ongoing support for parents through case management and peer support. Programs have a broad range of flexibility in how they provide these services.

Early Intervention (EI)

Services that are designed to address the developmental needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities, ages birth to three years, and their families. Early intervention services are generally administered by qualified personnel and require the development of an **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)**. Early intervention is authorized by the federal **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C**.

Early Learning and Development Guidelines/Standards

A set of expectations, guidelines, or **Developmental Milestones** that describe what all children from birth until kindergarten entry should know and be able to do as well as their disposition toward learning. These standards/guidelines must be developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate and cover all **Developmental Domains**.

Early Literacy

Refers to what children know about and are able to do as it relates to communication, language, reading, and writing before they can actually read and write. Children's experiences with conversation, books, print and stories (oral and written) all contribute to their early literacy skills.

Early Math/Numeracy

Refers to the foundations of mathematical reasoning that are acquired in early childhood, typically by way of number counting, measuring, sorting, noticing patterns and adding and subtracting numbers.

Educational Approach

Refers to the educational philosophy, method and/or pedagogical style adopted by early childhood providers. Examples of well-known and regarded educational approaches include Reggio-Emilia, Montessori and Head Start.

English Language Learner (ELL)

Refers to a child who is learning English and comes from a home or environment where the primary language is not English. ELLs are generally proficient in their own language but are usually unable to read, write, speak or understand English at a level comparable to their English proficient peers and native English speakers. **See related: Dual Language Learners (DLL); Limited English Speaking/Limited English Proficiency (LEP); Bilingual.**

Even Start

A family literacy program funded by the U.S. Department of Education that provided parents/families with instruction in a variety of literacy skills and assisted them in promoting their children's educational development.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

A 2015 federal law that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and replaced key requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The ESSA includes provisions to promote coordination in early learning among local communities; align preschool with early elementary school; and build the capacity of teachers, leaders and others serving young children to provide the highest-quality early learning opportunities. The ESSA also authorized **Preschool Development Grants** to support states' efforts to increase the number of children accessing high-quality preschool.

Evidence-Based Practice

A practice, regimen or service that is grounded in evidence and can demonstrate that it improves outcomes. Elements of evidence-based practice are standardized, replicable and effective within a given setting and for a particular group of participants. **See related: Best Practices.**

Executive Function

A group of cognitive skills that contribute to the development of **Self-Regulation**. Executive function skills include: cognitive flexibility, the ability to switch attention between different

rules; working memory, the ability to hold information in mind while working on a task; and inhibitory control, the ability to resist certain impulses in order to complete a goal.

Family (Parent) Engagement

Refers to an interactive process of relationship-building between early childhood professionals and families that is mutual, respectful, and responsive to the family's language and culture. Engagement in the early years prepares families to support their children's learning throughout their school years and support parent/family-child relationships that are key to healthy **Child Development, School Readiness**, and well-being. **See related: Parent/Family Involvement.**

Family Child Care

Child care provided for one or more unrelated children in a provider's home setting. Most states have regulatory guidelines for family child care homes based on the number and ages of children they serve as well as the number of hours their business operates. **See related: Home-based Child Care; Kith and Kin Child Care; Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Child Care; Informal Child Care.**

Family Child Care Networks

Community-based programs that offer a menu of ongoing services and supports to affiliated **Family Child Care** providers. Network services typically include some combination of visits to providers' homes to offer **Technical Assistance (TA), Coaching** or **Consultation**, training workshops and peer networking opportunities. Networks may help new providers with **Licensing** assistance, **CACFP** applications or acquiring start-up equipment; They may help more experienced providers with specific supports for improving their practice, obtaining **Professional Development (PD)**, or attaining national **Accreditation**. Family Child Care Networks are primarily funded through **CCDF**.

Family Literacy

Refers to a continuum of programs that support literacy for all family members. Family literacy programs are designed to help families overcome inter-generational cycles of illiteracy and poverty by providing integrated early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting education in a unified program.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Child Care

Child care provided by relatives, friends, and neighbors in the child's own home or in another home, often in unregulated settings. **See related: Kith and Kin Child Care; Informal Child Care.**

Financing Strategies

Refers to funding mechanisms and approaches that support early care and education services. Strategies typically include **Blended Funded, Braided Funding** and **Layered Funding**.

Fine Motor Skills

Actions that require control of the small muscles of the body to achieve skillfulness. Examples of fine motor skills include drawing, cutting with scissors, handwriting, and playing a musical instrument. **Compare with: Gross Motor Skills.**

Global Quality

Refers to the totality of features in an early childhood setting that affect children's

development. Global quality encompasses children's' interactions with caregivers and other children as well as characteristics of the setting's physical space, furnishings and materials.

Gross Motor Skills

A child's development of large muscle movement and control. Examples of gross motor skills include crawling, running, and jumping. **Compare with: Fine Motor Skills.**

Head Start

A federal program that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income families. The program is designed to foster stable family relationships, enhance children's physical and emotional well-being and support children's cognitive skills so they are ready to succeed in school. Federal grants are awarded to local public or private agencies, referred to as "grantees" to provide Head Start services. Head Start began in 1965 and is administered by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Head Start Bureau

Refers to the former name of the **Office of Head Start (OHS)**.

Head Start State Collaboration Grants

Funding granted to states and territories by **The Office of Head Start (OHS)** to create partnerships that support multi-agency and public-private partnerships. Head Start State Collaboration Offices create linkages between Head Start and other states' early childhood initiatives, service systems and priorities.

Home Language

The primary language that a child speaks at home. **See related: Native Language.**

Home-Based Child Care

Child care provided in a caregiver's home setting. Home-based child care may be regulated or unregulated, paid or unpaid, listed or unlisted. Narrower terms for specific home-based **Child Care Arrangements** might include **Family Child Care**, **Informal Child Care** and **Family, Friend and Neighbor Care**.

Home-Visiting Programs

Programs that aim to improve child outcomes by helping high-risk parents who are pregnant or have young children to enhance their parenting skills. Most home visiting programs match trained professionals and/or paraprofessionals with families to provide a variety of services in families' home settings. Examples of home visiting services can include health check-ups, developmental screenings, referrals, parenting advice, and guidance with navigating community services.

In-Service Training

Refers to **Professional Development** that occurs outside of a credentialing program that early childhood **Providers** take to enhance their skills and remain current regarding knowledge and practices in the field. A certain number of in-service training hours are typically required for early childhood professionals to maintain early childhood-related **Certifications**.

Inclusion

The principle of enabling all children, regardless of their diverse backgrounds or abilities, to participate actively in natural settings within their learning environments and larger communities.

Income Eligibility

Refers to one's ability to qualify for a program or service based on household income and related criteria, like family size.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Outlines the special education and related services that a child between the ages of 3 and 21 years must receive if they have been identified as having a disability. The IEP represents an agreement between the school or child care provider and the parent/family and is required based on the federal **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B**. A child has to be reevaluated every three years to maintain eligibility and continue to receive support services.

Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP)

A written plan that outlines the special services children ages birth through two years and their families will receive if found eligible for early intervention services. The plan is mandated by the federal **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C**. **See related: Early Intervention.**

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

A federal law enacted in 1990 that makes free appropriate public education (FAPE) available to eligible children with disabilities. The **IDEA**, previously known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), governs how states and public agencies provide **Special Education, Early Intervention**, and related services to eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. **See related:Part B of the IDEA;Part C of the IDEA.**

Informal Child Care

A term used to describe child care provided by relatives, friends, and neighbors in the child's own home or in another home, often in unregulated settings. **See related: Informal Child Care; Kith and Kin Child Care; Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care.**

Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)

Assessments developed by states and aligned with states' early learning and development standards to assess what children know and are able to do as they enter kindergarten. KEAs are sometimes referred to as kindergarten readiness assessments (KRAs).

Kindergarten Transition

Refers to a process or milestone in which a child moves from a **Preschool** setting to kindergarten.

Kith and Kin Child Care

A term used for child care provided by relatives (kin), and friends and neighbors (kith) in the child's own home or in another home, often in unregulated settings. **See related: Informal Child Care; Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Child Care; Home-based Child Care.**

Layered Funding

A **Financing Strategy** in which two or more sources pay for services, with core or foundational services being funded by one or more streams, and supplemental services being funded by additional and separate streams. **See related: Blended Funding; Braided Funding.**

Learning Disability

A general term that includes specific kinds of learning problems or impairments that affect one's ability to learn and use certain skills.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Refers to the legal requirement outlined in the **IDEA** of educating children with disabilities in regular classes, with suitable aids and supports, to the maximum extent appropriate. LRE requirements apply to all children with disabilities who are served under the **IDEA, Part B**. See related: Inclusion.

License Exempt Child Care

Legally operated child care that is exempt from regulatory requirements set forth by the state or the local licensing agency. To receive subsidies, license/legally exempt child care must comply with requirements of the **Subsidy** system (e.g., mandatory criminal background checks, healthy and safety inspections, etc.).

Licensed Capacity

Refers to the maximum number of children allowed to be in a licensed or regulated child care program or setting at any one time. Capacity is based upon the number of children for which adequate facilities and teachers/caregivers are provided, in accordance with supervision and space requirements.

Licensed Child Care

Child care programs operated in homes or in facilities that fall within the regulatory system of a state or community and comply with those regulations. Many states have different licensing and regulatory requirements.

Licensing Inspection

Onsite inspections of a child care program to monitor compliance with licensing or other regulatory requirements. Once a child care program has been licensed, it will receive inspections to ensure ongoing compliance. **See related: Monitoring.**

Licensing or Regulatory Requirements

Refers to requirements that providers must meet to legally operate child care services in a state or locality, including registration requirements established under state, local, or Tribal law.

Limited English Speaking/Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Individuals who speak a language other than English as their first language and have limited comprehension, and ability to speak, read or write in English. **See related: English Language Learners (ELL); Dual Language Learners (DLL); Bilingual.**

Linguistic Competence

The ability of an organization and its staff to communicate effectively with, and provide information to, people who may have limited English skills, low literacy, or disabilities.

Market Rate

The typical listed price for child care in a given geographic area. Market rates will vary due to factors such as location, types of care setting, hours of operation, ages of children they serve, and other features of the providers, such as their educational background. **See related: Cost of Care.**

McKinney-Vento Act

The primary piece of federal legislation related to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The Act authorizes the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program which entitles homeless children and youth to a Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), including a **Preschool** education.

Mentoring

A form of **Professional Development** characterized by an ongoing relationship between a novice and an experienced teacher or provider to deliver personalized instruction and feedback. Mentoring is intended to increase an individual's personal or professional capacity, resulting in greater professional effectiveness. **See related: Coaching, Consultation.**

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs

A **Head Start** program that serves families who are engaged in agricultural work and who have changed their residence from one geographical location to another in the preceding two-year period.

Military Child Care

Regulated child care supported by the Department of Defense (DoD) to children of military personnel.

Mixed Delivery System/Diverse Delivery System

Refers to an integrated system of early childhood education services that are offered through a variety of programs and providers (e.g., **Head Start**, Licensed Family Child Care, public schools, and **CBOs**) and are supported with a combination of public and private funding.

Mixed/Multi-Age Grouping

Grouping children or students so that the chronological age span within a group is greater than one year. Multiple age grouping is most prevalent in **Family or Home-based** child care settings.

Modification

Refers to a strategy that changes or modifies what a child with **Special Needs** is expected to learn. For example, a child with a cognitive impairment may only be expected to learn and demonstrate comprehension of a portion of the material taught to a **Typically Developing Child**. Only children with **IEPs** are entitled to modifications. **Compare with: Accommodation.**

Monitoring

The process used to enforce child care providers' compliance with licensing rules and

regulations. States use "differential monitoring" as a regulatory method for determining the frequency or depth of monitoring based on an assessment of the child care facility's compliance history and other quality indicators.

Native Language

The language that a person learns at home as a child, typically from a parent. Native language is sometimes referred to as one's "mother tongue" or **Home Language**.

Nontraditional Hour Child Care

Child care provided during nontraditional work hours such as over weekends or before 6am or after 7pm, Monday-Friday.

Nursery Schools

Child care programs designed for children ages 3-5 that typically operate for fewer hours/day and days/week than other child care option and tend to have less regulatory oversight. **See related: Preschool, Pre-kindergarten.**

Observational Tools

Refers to instruments that are used to observe aspects of the quality of a learning setting or environment. **Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)** commonly use the Environment Rating Scales (i.e., ECERS,ITERS,FCCERS, SACCERS) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to measure and improve the quality of the learning environment and teacher effectiveness, respectively.

Office of Child Care (OCC)

A division of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that supports low-income working families to access affordable, high quality child care and **After-School** programs. The **OCC** administers the **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)** to states, territories, and federally recognized tribes.

Office of Head Start (OHS)

A federal office that manages **Head Start** grant funding provided by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and oversees local agencies that provide Head Start services.

On Site Child Care

Child care programs that occur in facilities where parents/family members are on the premises, such as on school campuses or in employment/job settings. **See related: Drop in/Short Term Child Care.**

Out of School Time (OST)

Refers to time periods outside of regular school hours, such as before/after school, weekends, holidays, and summer breaks, in which school age children generally need child care and other types of programming and services. See related: After-School Program.

Parent Choice

Refers to families' ability to access **Child Care Arrangements** of their choosing. The term is often used to refer to the **CCDF** stipulation that parents receiving **Subsidies** should be able to

use all legal forms of care, even if a form of child care would be otherwise unregulated by the state.

Parent Involvement

Refers to active parent/family participation in a child's care and education. To increase Parent Involvement, child care providers will typically identify projects, needs, and goals and let parents know how they can contribute. Parental involvement is often measured by metrics related to attendance at school meetings, events and parent-teacher conferences; or by volunteering or serving on a school committee. **See related: Family Engagement.**

Parenting Education

Instruction or information directed toward parents and families to increase effective parenting skills.

Part B of the IDEA

A section of the **IDEA** that lays out the educational and funding guidelines and requirements for children with disabilities from 3-21 years of age. Part B references requirements related to the **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**.

Part C of the IDEA

A section of the **IDEA** that lays out the educational and funding guidelines and requirements for children with disabilities from birth through two years of age. Part C references requirements related to the **Individualized Family Services Plans (IFSP)** and Early Intervention services.

Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance/TA

A form of **Professional Development** in which early care and education professionals work together, often with supervision from a professional instructor, to improve their caregiving and educational practices.

Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA)

Federal legislation that was designed to move adults quickly and permanently into the workforce, promote family stability, and allocate greater flexibility to states in designing public-assistance programs. Signed in 1996, the Act instituted **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**, replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program and supplanted the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training program (JOBS).

Play

Voluntary, intrinsically motivated activities commonly associated with pleasure and enjoyment, not for the purpose of meeting specific learning outcomes. Through play, young children engage and interact in the world around them, developing new **Competencies** across **Developmental Domains**. Types of play include dramatic/fantasy play, rough and tumble, and parallel and cooperative play, among others.

Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)

Programs designed for three and four year olds that focus on **School Readiness**. Though sometimes used interchangeably with "**Preschool**" and "**Nursery School**," Pre-K programs are typically government funded and stipulate compliance with quality and accountability standards that exceed regulatory requirements for other types of early learning settings (e.g.,

by requiring specific advanced qualifications for teachers). Pre-K programs are commonly operated in conjunction with public school districts, but also exist in various early education settings. **See related: Mixed Delivery Systems.**

Pre-Service Education/Training

The education, training and/or professional experiences that a child care staff member may undergo prior to assuming a particular role or position within a child care program.

Preschool

Programs that provide early education and care to children before they enter kindergarten, typically from ages 2.5-5 years. Preschools may be publicly or privately operated and may receive public funds.

Preschool Development Grant (PDG)

A program authorized by the **ESSA** of 2015 that provides competitive grants, managed jointly by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education, for states to improve coordination, **Quality**, and **Access** to early childhood education for low- and moderate-income children from birth to age five. The ESSA's Preschool Development Grants (PDG) are also geared towards increasing **Parent Choice** and supporting high need and rural communities. ESSA's PDG succeeded the U.S. Department of Education's prior Preschool Development Grant Program, which provided 2 years of funding for a select number of states to expand access to high-quality **Pre-k** for four year olds from low-income backgrounds.

Process Quality

Refers to the features of an early childhood setting related to caregiver-child interactions that affect children's development. **Compare with: Global Quality; Structural Quality.**

Professional Development (PD)

Refers to a continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with, and on behalf of, young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. Professional development encompasses education, training, and **Technical Assistance (TA)**, which leads to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of early education professionals.

Protective Factors

Refers to characteristics that reduce the impact of **Risk Factors** on children's learning and development. Protective factors can exist at the family, child and community level, such as attending high quality early childhood programs and having strong **Family Engagement**.

Quality

The characteristics of learning environments that promote the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of young children. High quality programs typically exceed state regulatory requirements, utilizing **Developmentally Appropriate** curricula and prioritizing adequate teacher and administrative qualifications, ongoing **Professional Development**, and **Family Engagement** strategies, among others qualities.

Quality Initiatives

Refers to projects designed to increase the quality and availability of early care and education

programs and services. **CCDF** provides funding for some quality initiatives, including **Child Care Resource and Referral** services for parents; training, **PD** and wage enhancements for staff; and facility improvement and **Accreditation** for child care programs. **See related: QRIS.**

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

A system typically administered by a state or local jurisdiction used to assess, improve and communicate the quality of early care and learning settings. Most incorporate some variation of the following elements: quality standards; a system for rating/measuring and monitoring program quality; resources to improve quality such as grants for classroom materials and staff scholarships; and outreach services to educate and communicate with key stakeholders about choosing high **Quality** early education. QRIS may also create a range of financial incentives to motivate programs to achieve higher levels of quality. **See related: Tiered Reimbursement System; Quality Initiatives.**

Quality Set-Aside Funding

A specified portion of a larger pool of funding reserved for quality improvement-related activities. Programs that receive **CCDF** subsidies are required to set-aside a percentage of their budget to achieve a range of priorities, including increasing the supply and quality of infant/toddler care.

Race to Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC)

A federal grant competition that awarded funding to select states to improve the quality of early learning and development programs and to close the achievement gap for children with high needs. RTT-ELC legislation was authorized under the **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)** of 2009.

Redetermination Period

The period of time that a family can receive assistance before having to reestablish that they are still eligible for a benefits (e.g., a child care **Subsidy**).

Regulated Child Care

Child care facilities and homes that are required to comply with either a state's regulatory system or another system of regulation. There is considerable state variation in the characteristics of the homes and facilities that must comply with regulations, as well as in the regulations themselves. **See related: Licensed Child Care.**

Reimbursement Rates

Refers to the amount of money that child care providers who accept **CCDF Vouchers (Subsidies)** are reimbursed by the state to care for low-income children. The amount Providers are reimbursed depends on a variety of factors, such as whether their program participates in the state's QRIS. A program or provider's reimbursement rate may also depend on characteristics of the children they serve, such as whether they care for children with **Special Needs**.

Relative Child Care

Child care provided by extended family members either in the child's home or at a relative's home. **See related: Informal Child Care; Kith and Kin Care; Family, Friend and Neighbor Child Care (FFN).**

Resilience

Refers to children's ability to cope and develop in positive ways when faced with setbacks, hardships or adversity. Resilience in children can be fostered at the individual, family and community level. **See related: ACE.**

Respite Child Care

Child care services, typically provided to vulnerable families, that offer temporary relief, improve family stability, and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect. Respite child care can be planned or offered during emergencies or times of crisis.

Retention (Staff)

Refers to the ability of programs to retain their employees over time. Staff retention is a well-documented problem in early childhood programs that affects program quality

Risk Factors

Refers to circumstances that increase a child's susceptibility to a wide range of negative outcomes and experiences. Risk factors for low school readiness may include parental/family characteristics such as low socioeconomic status and education, children's characteristics, such as whether the child has **Special Needs**, or community conditions and experiences, such as whether the child has access to high **Quality** early care and education. **Compare with: Protective Factors.**

Scaffolding

Refers to a method of teaching new concepts that typically involves leveraging skills and knowledge that children already have. An example of scaffolding might involve asking leading questions to allow a child to come to the correct conclusion or outcome on his or her own.

School Age Child Care

Child care that takes place outside of regular school hours for children over the age of 5. **See related: Out of School Time (OST) child care; After-School Program.**

School Based Child Care

Child care programs that occur in school facilities.

School Readiness

A term to describe the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to successfully transition to, and perform well in, the early school years. School readiness is typically determined based on children's developmental status and progress in the following five domains: language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, **Approaches to Learning**, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development.

Self Regulation

The ability to control one's emotions, behaviors, and thought processes in order to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Examples of self-regulation in children include being able to wait a short time for something they want and calming oneself down after becoming upset. **See related: Executive Function.**

Separation Anxiety

Anxiety or distress experienced by a child when separated from a primary caregiver or attachment figure. Separation anxiety typically starts around 8-12 months when infants/toddlers develop an understanding of object permanence (that things and people exist even when they're not present).

Sick/III Child Care

Non-medical child care services provided to a children with mild, temporary illnesses, that prevent them from attending regular child care programming. Sick Child Care is sometimes referred to as "mildly ill child care."

Sliding Fee Scale

A formula for determining the child care fees or **Copayments** that families are required to pay their child care provider, usually based on family income. Families that are eligible for **CCDF**-subsidized child care pay fees according to an income-based sliding fee scale developed by the state, territory, or tribe.

Social Impact Bonds (SIB)

An innovative financial tool, sometimes referred to as "Pay for Success" financing, that enables government agencies to pay for programs that deliver results. In a SIB agreement, the government sets a specific, measurable outcome that it wants achieved in a population and promises to pay an external organization/intermediary if, and only if, the organization accomplishes the desired outcome. Through SIBs, investors provide the working capital for the external organization to hire and manage social service providers. Then, if the deliverables are met, the government releases an agreed-upon sum of money to the external organization, which then repays its investors with a return for taking on the upfront risk.

Social-Emotional Development

Refers to the development process whereby children learn to identify and understand their own feelings, accurately read and comprehend emotional states in others, manage and express strong emotions in constructive manners, regulate their behavior, develop empathy for others, and establish and maintain relationships.

Special Education

Instruction that is designed to meet the unique needs of children who have identified learning differences or disabilities. To be eligible for special education services, the child's disability must adversely affect his or her educational performance and require specially designed instruction that cannot be addressed through general education classes alone, with or without individual accommodations. Per the **IDEA**, special education and related services are provided at no cost to families, and can include special instruction in the classroom, at home, in hospitals, or in other institutions or settings. **See related: IEP; IFSP; Special Needs; ECSE.**

Special Needs

A term used to describe a child with an identified learning disability or physical or mental health condition requiring **Special Education** services, or other specialized services and supports. **See related: Early Intervention (EI), IEP; IFSP; Special Needs.**

State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care (SACs)

Federally funded state-level advisory councils charged with developing high **Quality**, comprehensive early care and education systems and ensuring statewide coordination and collaboration with existing early childhood programs and services. SACs were authorized by the Improving **Head Start** Readiness Act of 2007, and funded through the **ARRA** of 2009.

Strength-based

An approach to equity in early childhood education that focuses on, and is responsive to, children's and families' unique strengths, diverse learning styles, interests, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, etc.

Structural Quality

Refers to the features of an early childhood setting that affect children's development, which can typically be regulated by licensing and regulatory agencies. Aspects of Structural Quality include **Adult Child Ratios**, group sizes, and staff education and training requirements.

Subsidized Child Care

Child care that is at least partially funded by public or charitable resources to decrease the cost to families.

Subsidy

Private or public assistance that reduces the cost of child care for families.

Subsidy Take-Up Rates

The rate at which eligible families use child care subsidies. Due to limited funding or waiting lists, not all eligible families may have access to subsidies.

Supply Building

Efforts to increase the quantity of child care programs in a particular local area.

Technical Assistance (TA)

The provision of targeted and customized supports by a professional(s) with subject matter expertise and adult learning knowledge and competencies. In an early education setting, TA is typically provided to teaching and administrative staff to improve the quality of services and supports they provide to children and families. **See related: Coaching; Mentoring; Consultation; Professional Development.**

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

A federally funded grant program, created upon the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996, that provides funds to states, territories, and tribes to design and operate programs that help needy families achieve economic security and child and family well-being, including through the provision of child care services. States vary in how they administer **CCDF** and TANF. Lead agencies may operate the two programs jointly or may align particular policies and practices across programs. In some states, families interact with both programs as the operation of particular functions of child care assistance (e.g., eligibility determination, authorization, **Redetermination**, etc.) may be distributed across programs. States can utilize several methods for using TANF funds to pay for child care, such as by commingling and/or transferring a portion of their TANF funds to their

state's CCDF, or spending TANF directly for child care. TANF replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS).

Therapeutic Child Care

Services or programming geared towards **At Risk** children, such as those living in homeless shelters or victims of violence or neglect. Therapeutic child care is commonly an integrated component of a well-structured treatment program in which services are provided by professional and paraprofessional staff in a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environments.

Tiered Reimbursement System

A subsidy payment system that offers higher payments for child care programs that meet higher quality standards or for child care that is in short supply. Some states systematically leverage tiered reimbursements for programs that attain national **Accreditation** and/or higher quality ratings in their states' **Quality Rating and Improvement Systems**. These states typically refer to their systems as Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (TQRIS).

Title 1

Part of the original **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)** legislation of 1965 that was designed to provide fair, equitable and high-quality education to all children, to reduce achievement gaps and improve academic performance among students living in poverty. Title I, Part A allows **LEAs** to use their Title I funds for **Preschool** programs and services to improve educational outcomes for children up to the age at which the LEA provides free public elementary education.

Toxic Stress

A term to describe the kinds of negative experiences that can affect brain architecture and brain chemistry, particularly in a developing child. Examples include strong, frequent/chronic, and/or prolonged exposure to adversity such as physical or emotional abuse, neglect, violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship, without adequate adult support.

Transitional Child Care

Child care **subsidies** offered to families that are no longer income eligible for public assistance, generally due to employment, as they transition to greater financial independence. The Family Support Act of 1986 established a federal Transitional Child Care program, which was later replaced by the **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)**.

Trauma Informed Care (TIC)

Refers to an approach used in working with children exposed to traumatic events or conditions. Children exposed to trauma may display heightened aggression, poor social skills and impulsivity; and may struggle academically or engage in risk-taking or other challenging behaviors. Service providers and family members that are trained in TIC learn effective ways to interact with these children, such as by helping them cope with traumatic "triggers," supporting their emotion regulation skills, maintaining predictable routines, and using effective behavior management strategies. See related: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE); Toxic Stress.

Tribal Child Care

Publicly supported child care programs offered by Native American Tribes in the United States.

Federally recognized Tribes can become **CCDF** grantees and receive implementation and training support through the **OCC's** National Center on Tribal Early Childhood Development (NCTECD). When receiving public funding, tribal child care programs are subject to regulatory requirements and oversight.

Two-Generation Programs

Programs that provide comprehensive services for both parents/families and children in order to simultaneously promote healthy **child development** and economic self-sufficiency. In two generation programs, services such as job training, parent education and housing assistance are provided along with early education programs. **See related: Dual Generation Strategies.**

Typically Developing Child

Refers to a child whose development follows a predictable or "normal" course. The acquisition of certain **Developmental Milestones** is often used to gauge such development. Typical development is the most appropriate way to describe a child who does not have **Special Needs**.

Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)

A movement within the U.S. education system to make access to **Prekindergarten** available to all children and families within a given jurisdiction, regardless of the child's abilities and family income. UPK services can be offered in a **Mixed Delivery System**. States vary in what they define as "universal" and in how far they have progressed, or desire to progress, towards implementation.

Unlicensed Child Care

Child care programs that have not been licensed by the state. The term often refers both to **Legally/License-Exempt Child Care** such as **FFN Child Care** that can legally operate without a license as well as a program that illegally operates without a license. Unlicensed child care is also referred to as unregulated or non-regulated child care.

Vouchers and Contracts

Refers to forms or mechanisms of payment that income eligible families can use to help pay for child care. Vouchers are issued to eligible families to pay for any legal child care they select that accepts state payments—including unregulated **Informal Family Child Care**, **Family-based Child Care** and **Center-based Child Care**. By contrast, contracts are pre-negotiated arrangements made between jurisdictions and child care centers and/or networks of family child care homes to provide subsidized care to blocks of eligible children that they enroll.

Waiver

Permission granted by a regulatory agency that allows an individual or entity to forgo or delay the implementation of a requirement, usually temporarily. For example, states and territories can apply for temporary waivers to defer implementing certain **CCDF** program requirements.

Work Requirements

Refers to the employment-related requirements upon which receipt of child care **Subsidies** or cash assistance is contingent. In order to qualify for subsidies, parents must typically be employed or enrolled in a training or education program.

Workforce

The broad range of individuals engaged in the care and education of young children. Members of the early childhood workforce may include teaching, caregiving and administrative staff, as well as consultants, learning specialists, and others that provide training and **Technical Assistance** to programs.

Workforce Registry

A system, usually electronic, where early childhood professionals keep track of career-related information and documentation such as their education and employment history, ongoing trainings and related professional development.

Wrap Around Child Care Programs

Child care program in which a team of providers collaborate to improve the lives of the children and families they serve by creating, enhancing, and accessing a coordinated and comprehensive system of supports. Supports might include formal services and interventions, such as enrichment and academic supports outside of regular child care programming, community and health services like doctor visits, and interpersonal assistance such as family counseling. Wrap-around programs also sometimes refer to care provided before, after or outside of **Nontraditional Hour Child Care** to accommodate family schedules.

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