

Career Choices & Challenges

A News Sheet about Montana Early Care and Education Career Development

Fall 2011



Practitioner Registry Achievement AWARDS

This award is designed to reward early childhood practitioners who move up to a Level 4 or beyond on the Practitioner Registry/Career Path. Level 4 is the first level on the Career Path that requires an early childhood college course of study. To be eligible, one must complete early childhood courses and move up on the Career Path after January 2011.

Practitioners need to have been employed in a state licensed or registered early childhood program for 12 consecutive months after having achieved their new level to apply for this AWARD. Starting January 1, 2012 eligible practitioners can apply for this award by visiting www.mtscdp.org and clicking on AWARDS.



Spotlight: Collette Box, Kalispell

Collette Box has been involved with Discovery Developmental Center since its beginning days in 1992, and its director since 1995. The program serves fifty to sixty families with children ages two to six years of age. She has had a long journey to come to this place where she thrives as the “people person” she is! She returned to college at Flathead Valley Community College and found her passion in child development and early childhood education, achieving an associate degree in 1992. Practical experience with a great teacher model at Head Start, as well as experience in a group home child care setting led to a decision to work with young children full-time. Collette began as the two and three year old teacher at Discovery and moved into the assistant director and director positions over the years.

The program is a non-profit organization with a five member board, six full-time staff and six part-time staff, some of whom have been there for more than fifteen years and others more than ten years! Six years ago the program moved into their brand new facility designed for young children and families (after having to move 40 children and all the equipment and materials two times over the course of a year and a half!) The building sits on an acre of land, one third of which is currently being developed into a natural playground! The design and planting plan have been fully donated by a local architect.

Collette is most proud of the fact that Discovery “is still here after 20 years, that we continually have families bringing their second, third and fourth children to the program. That, as well as the longevity of staff “says to me that we have created a good place for kids and adults!” Not only Collette, but the teaching staff and families have benefitted from several of MT’s Best Beginnings grants and scholarship programs to help pay the cost of training, higher education, and child care.

Collette has learned a great deal by “doing” on -the-job and through ongoing training and education provided by local resources, the college, and the Montana Association for the Education of Young Children (MtAEYC) and its active Flathead Chapter. She participated in the MtAEYC Leadership Institute in 2001 which motivated her to become more involved at the local, state and national level around early childhood issues. Collette will complete her bachelor’s degree from the University of Montana Western soon. Her final practicum is focused upon the development of recommendations for a MT Directors’ Credential, working with the Early Childhood Project. She is providing leadership through a working group of directors and conducting research about other states’ approaches to director credentials.

Collette chooses not to focus on the challenges of time and money in this field, but rather on loving her work with kids and families, using her brain which she knows will keep her young and her love of learning! Keep up the good work in the Flathead, Collette!

National Credential: Child Development Associate (CDA)

The national Council for Professional Recognition awards CDA credentials to practitioners who meet specific training and assessment criteria. In Montana, a good way to achieve the required training is by completing the 60 hour Montana Infant Toddler Care-giver Education course and the 60 hour Preschool Teacher Education Course that lead to Montana certificates.

In addition to completing the required training, there are other steps in the process you will need to complete before you apply for assessment to the Council in Washington, D.C.

The Early Childhood Project recognizes a current CDA credential on the Practitioner Registry/Career Path as a Level 3 and has scholarships to help interested individuals pay the \$325 assessment fee. Read the Early Childhood Project CDA Info Sheet at <http://www.mtecp.org/pdfs/Info%20Sheets/Info%20Sheet%20CDA.pdf> or find out about the CDA scholarship at <http://www.mtecp.org/pdfs/Scholarships/CDAapp&cover2007.pdf>.

For more information on the CDA Credential, and the criteria to be eligible for an assessment, go to www.cdacouncil.org.



NEW Distance Learning Options Approved

We have approved some new training options for practitioners in Montana. Some of the PBS TeacherLine courses are now accepted as training hours for both licensing and the Practitioner Registry annual training hours. First go to the ECP website and click on Training Approval and scroll down to Distance Learning to see specific training that has been approved. The PBS website, <http://www.pbs.org/teacherline>, will give you course descriptions.

The other newly approved training is through the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). There are 2 online family child care training courses. Each course is worth 45 clock hours. Both classes are stand-alone and may be taken one at a time or at the same time. The titles of the training are *Teaching and Learning in Family Child Care* and *Creating Safe and Healthy Family Child Care Environments*. To read more about these two options and to register visit <http://nafcc.org> and click on Training Institute at the top of the page. Select "Family Child Care Training" to access information.

Submit your certificates of completion to the ECP so we can add them to your Professional Development Record. We are excited to be offering more Distance Learning options for practitioners. We also love to receive feedback so please feel free to let us know how you liked these offerings. Montana is always monitoring the quality and value of the trainings that we approve so your feed back is important to us. Enjoy!

\$\$ Registry Payments \$\$

Are you sending Practitioner Registry fees by check?

The legal name of the person(s) MUST be included or the check will be returned. The ECP cannot accept payment that is not attached to individual applications. Thank you!

Heads Up!

Please, please, please be sure to submit *Individual Requests for Training Approval* within three months of the event. It is our policy to not approve or accept any training that was done more than three months from the date that we receive the request. Find this form on our website and click on Training Approval and scroll down. Thank you for your cooperation!

The NEW Best Beginnings State Advisory Council is Born

The first meeting of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council was held in September in Helena. This is a governor-appointed council administered through the Early Childhood Services Bureau, Department of Health and Human Services. The council has a strategic goal to develop a comprehensive and coordinated early childhood system that can provide a governance structure and lead to strong collaboration among all entities involved with young children.

There are four principal system objectives:

- Children have access to high quality early childhood programs;
- Families with young children are supported in their communities
- Children have access to a medical home and health insurance
- Social, emotional and mental health needs of young children and families are supported.

The council will operate with five committees high quality early care and education; supporting families; health and social, emotional health; professional development; and strategic communications, outreach and public awareness. Seven community councils across the state have been funded to do similar work in their area. Please contact Debbie Hansen at Deborahansen@mt.gov or at 406.444.1400.