

New York State Parenting Education Partnership

History of the Development of the Parenting Educator Credential

Since the first statewide meeting of NYSPEP in 2007, the professional development and recognition of parenting educators with competencies related to effective parenting education practice has been a focus of the organization's activities. One component of this work is the development of the NYSPEP Parenting Educator Credential.

Between August and November, 2008, one hundred ten (110) parenting educators took part in focus groups held in Albany, Elmira, Manhattan, Long Island and Rochester, New York. Participants were asked to identify the knowledge and skills they needed to do their work well and how they received education and training to achieve these competencies. They were not asked how much formal education they had, but most listed curriculum trainings or conferences as their training resources. They did indicate they were interested in having trainings linked to a track that would qualify them for a parenting education credential. They were interested in the infrastructure of support, training, and connections of a professional organization.

Following this, a committee of experienced parenting educators from agencies and programs across New York State collected information from education, training, and credentialing systems for parenting educators that existed across the country. The competency and/or core curriculum lists were collected from Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education (MN Board of Teaching), Texas Association of Parent Educators (University of North Texas), Certified Family Life Educator (National Council on Family Relations), Louisiana Parenting Education Network (LA Dept. of Health and Hospitals), and North Carolina Parenting Education Network and Connecticut Parenting Education Network (both based on the National Extension Parent Education Framework). Based on the information collected from these resources and related professional publications the NYSPEP Credential Committee developed the competency list and credentialing process. When the list was completed, it was reviewed by four experienced university faculty across the country who have been active in developing, researching, and publishing about parenting education programs and methods.¹ A final edit of the NYSPEP Parenting Educator Competencies was done based on their input.

The Competencies of the NYSPEP Parenting Educator Credential include both knowledge that parents need to support the healthy development of their children and the skills that parenting educators need to work effectively and respectfully with families. The Core Competencies are: Why we all need parenting education, Child and life span development, Health and safety, Strengths-based communication, Family systems and relationship building, Adult learning and learning styles, Community systems and resources, Social and emotional wellness, Nurturing discipline, Educational and child care relationships, Working with diversity, and Professional ethics. Four tiers were established with the first, Resource Associate, requiring a basic understanding of the competencies to be able to appropriately support families and parenting educators in their work. The other three tiers expect increasing depth and complexity in understanding and use of the competencies in direct work with parents. Tiers 3 and 4 require additional competencies needed for program design, management, evaluation and supervision.

¹ Professionals consulted were Glen Palm (University of Minnesota, Saint Cloud), Dana McDermott (DePaul University), Sharon Ballard (East Carolina University), and Margaret Arcus (University of British Columbia).

The Minnesota Teacher of Parent and Family Education requires a graduate degree and the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exam. The Certified Family Life Educator from NCFR, originally a portfolio application process, now requires a degree from an NCFR approved academic program or the CFLE exam. All other recognition programs listed above require that competency be documented through a portfolio process. It was decided the NYSPEP Credential would use a portfolio to assess competence.

The NYSPEP Parenting Educator Credential, portfolio requires the following components:

- Profile in the Aspire Registry to document education, training and experience,
- Detailed competency worksheet to document understanding and appropriate application of each competency
- Personal parenting education philosophy
- Parenting education work resume
- Letters of recommendation from a parent participant and a supervisor
- Signed Ethics Statement

Parenting education is a field that encompasses knowledge and skills that stem from several disciplines. As specialized adult educators, parenting educators are challenged to have both broad knowledge about children, parents, families and communities, and skills to build respectful relationships and impart knowledge to adults caring for children. The portfolio method assesses not only skills and knowledge but also ability to apply this knowledge. To insure rigor in this process, in addition to documenting education, training and experience, applicants are required to submit short essays describing their understanding of, experience with, and personal philosophy regarding each competency.

Each application is reviewed by a panel of credentialed parenting educators. After reading the application and evaluating each competency statement for completeness, relevance, strengths and weaknesses, the review panel meets by teleconference to discuss the application. If the competency statements are not adequate, the applicant may be asked to submit additional examples or details, or to do additional study or practice before resubmitting the application.

The first applications for Tier 1 and Tier 2 were accepted in late 2011. The first credentials were awarded at the Child Abuse Prevention Conference in April 2012. The first Tier 3 credentials were awarded in 2014. The NYSPEP Credential is valid for four years. Twenty contact hours of additional education or training in any of the competency areas is required for credential renewal. The first Credential renewals were awarded in 2016. To date, 79 credentials have been awarded.