

# **Developing an ECE Profession: What Will It Take?**

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# Session Agenda

- Introductions
- Session overview
- Distinction between occupations & professions
- Expressing our preferred choice for ECE's future
- How do we move from here to there?
- Whole group discussion
- Closing Question

# Session Objectives

- Participants will understand differences between occupations and professions and the meaning of these differences for ECE as a field of practice.
- Participants will further their skills to pursue conversations with the intent of exploring different perspectives around practice standards, professional development, and compensation.
- Participants will begin outlining a roadmap for moving ECE forward as a profession.

# Occupations & Professions

- **Hold on tight!**
- **ECE is not yet a profession even though we routinely call it such.**
- **Occupations and professions are differently organized as fields of practice.**
- **Recognized professions are systems that meet required criteria, and ECE hasn't yet decided whether it wants to meet them.**
- **We have yet to lay proprietary claim to ECE as a professional field of practice.**

# Occupations & Professions

**This means as a field of practice, we/ECE have a choice. ECE needs to select a destination.**

**We've three options:**

- 1. Continue accommodating **the status quo**.**
- 2. Reform ECE's occupational status with increased intentionality [**Professionalize**].**
- 3. Re-form ECE as a field of practice so it becomes a recognized **Profession**.**

# Typical Meanings For “Professional”

- **Paid vs. amateur.**
- **Nicely dressed.**
- **Reliable, dependable, respectful.**
- **Good at what one does.**
- **Prepared for what one does.**
- **Presence of deep knowledge or expertise.**

- **Market or employer driven**
- **Service for hire – Employers & consumers can hire whomever they want**
- **... And “Other Duties As Assigned”**
- **Individually focused vs. collectively responsible**
- **Sometimes externally regulated or monitored**
- **Certificates, degrees, apprenticeships increase occupational skill and marketability**

## **Occupations**

**ECE Presently Is Loosely Structured As An Occupation**

# Four Pillars Of Professions

**\*A Unified System of Public Accountability\***

**A Shared “Noble”  
Purpose**

**Roles, Scopes of  
Practice, &  
Practice  
Competencies**

**Formal Preparation  
Prior To Entry Into  
The Profession**

**Self-Determination  
Tied to Profession’s  
“Noble Purpose” &  
Standards of Practice**



**Interconnections among professions' four pillars form a systemic infrastructure whose behaviors result in competent, responsible professionals prior to being recognized as early childhood educators.**

**— Regardless of program setting, financing, or state.**

- The adjective **professional** and verb **professionalizing** often get confused with **profession** as a noun — and with non-professionalized occupations.
- Recognized professions are purpose-driven, self-determining, coherent systems of preparation, practice, and public accountability.
- Professions are differently structured than non-professionalized occupations **because their professionals shoulder a different obligation to each other, the public, and those who are recipients of their practices.**
- And once licensed to practice, they become accountable to the public for their practices.

# Getting from Here to There

## What Will It Take To...

- **WORKFORCE READINESS:** Get the early childhood educator workforce who works directly with children ready to meet new occupational or professional standards?
- **HIGHER EDUCATION READINESS:** Get the higher education system ready to support the early childhood educator workforce ready to meet new occupational or professional standards?
- **WORKFORCE STANDARDS:** Put the new occupational or professional standards in place in your communities, states or the nation?

# Barriers to Achieving a Degreed Early Care and Education Workforce

- Individual
- Employer
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Larger Early Care and Education System

# Individual

- Economic
- Motivational
- Familial
- Educational
- Language/Cultural
- Location
- Time

# Employer

- Economic
- Educational
- Leadership
- Environmental
- Structural

# Higher Education

- Limited support for student success
  - High counseling/student advisement caseloads
  - Mismatch between faculty & student demographics
  - Lack of faculty and institutional understanding of needs of working students
  - Disconnected and unsupported remedial coursework
- No/poor articulation for prior learning, coursework and/or degrees
- Inconsistent quality and content of coursework
- Accessibility roadblocks to higher education
  - Cumbersome admissions/enrollment
  - High cost of tuition and books
  - Language, time, place and/or modality barriers

# Early Care and Education System

- Career pathways
- Professional standards
- Funding
- Data
- Program standards
- Policy
- Fragmentation



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