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# Director Credential Update

In October of 1995, Work/Family Directions hosted a Director Credential Symposium in Boston funded by the American Business Collaborative. This meeting was the culmination of mounting evidence that the performance of the director is a key determinant of a center's level of quality. Meeting participants, who represented a wide variety of sectors in our field, concluded that a director's credential would be an effective means of stimulating the improvement of director performance. Eventually a loose coalition of these meeting participants, referred to as the Director's Credential Caucus and currently chaired by Roger Neugebauer, agreed to widen the discussion about a credential.

In various meetings across the country, including most recently NAEYC's Professional Development Forum in Minneapolis, caucus members organized presentations and brainstorming sessions about director development and the concept of a credential. In addition, readers of *Child Care Information Exchange* were surveyed about their views on a director credential. This update will summarize points of consensus that appear to be emerging from the discussions to date, as well as outline where we need to go from here.

## Points of Agreement

- **A center director credential has merit.** A credential would recognize and promulgate the professionalism of effective center directors. It would stimulate directors to improve their performance.
- **The ultimate goal of this effort is to improve the quality of care children receive in centers.** Improved performance of center directors will have a direct impact on improved service delivery. In addition, the credentialing of directors will increase public respect for the field of early childhood education.
- **Current licensing requirements for center directors are woefully inadequate.** Only a handful of states have anything but the most basic requirements for the person operating a child care center. A director credential not only would recognize the need for professionalism in this role but would also establish standards that might stimulate states to upgrade their requirements.
- **Current training opportunities for center directors are woefully inadequate.** There are many excellent training programs available for directors, but these do not come anywhere close to meeting the needs of the nation's 100,000 center directors. To make a difference, the stimulation of director credential efforts needs to be matched with the proliferation of a variety of training opportunities.
- **An effective director needs to possess a wide range of skills.** At the Minneapolis conference, participants identified over 40 specific tasks a director is called upon to perform. Among these, the following were identified as most critical in order of priority: motivating staff, developing a program philosophy, strategic planning, communicating expectations, goal setting, securing outside funding/financing, assuring compliance with legal requirements, and training staff.
- **An effective center director is more than a technician.** A director needs to be able to do much more than simply carry out these specific tasks. For example, she must be able to visualize the future of her organization and imbue staff with enthusiasm for this vision, and she must be capable of exercising wise judgment when confronted with complex challenges. Any director credential effort and any related training programs must recognize these vital leadership abilities.
- **The outcome of the current effort to explore the director credential should be the evolution of a national model.** Many state and national director credential projects are already in place or in process. The work of the Director Credential

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Caucus should not undermine or discount these activities. Rather, the final product should be a national model for a director credential which incorporates the best thinking from all sectors on the performance of directors, is flexible enough to account for current credentialing efforts, and is bold enough to inspire many new and unique credentialing projects.

## What Happens Next?

A few more brainstorming sessions are scheduled for conferences around the country this summer and a preconference session on the director credential will occur at the November NAEYC convention in Dallas. Hopefully at these forums progress will be made at flushing out the details of a national model for the director credential. In addition, a coalition of foundations, as well as the American Business Collaborative, have expressed interest in the director credential concept.

Meanwhile, the center director credential projects in states such as Wisconsin, Texas, and Mississippi are moving forward as is that of the National Child Care Association. The experiences of these efforts will certainly inform the development of director credentialing.

Stay tuned to *Child Care Information Exchange* for continuing news and views on the director credential.