

# Oklahoma Core Competencies

for

Out-of-School  
Time  
Practitioners



**Child Care  
Services**

**The Oklahoma  
Core Competencies  
for  
Out-of-School Time Program  
Practitioners**

(01/15)

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# INTRODUCTION

As children grow from infancy through preschool and on into middle childhood, they need to have access to programs that provide them with opportunities to grow and learn in a safe and nurturing environment. Quality programs for children and youth should be staffed with qualified adults who have unique attributes, knowledge and skills to work with this age group. The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Out-of-School Time Program Practitioners will identify what adults who work with school-age children and youth in Oklahoma need to know, understand and be able to do to provide quality programs and provide the framework for the professional development system for practitioners.

# PURPOSE AND GOALS

The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Out-of-School Time Program Practitioners provide a framework for the skills necessary to deliver quality programs in all out-of-school time settings. These programs are housed in a variety of agencies and organizations including public schools, community centers, faith-based organizations, child care centers and family child care homes. Program sponsors include 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Scouts, civic organizations, clubs, youth development organizations, etc. The competencies are based on best practices and are research-based. The main goal of this document is to create a foundation of professional development and educational options implemented throughout the state for all adults who work with school-age children and youth.

These core competencies will serve as the base for quality school-age programs in Oklahoma where school-age children and youth learn, play and grow. This document will provide a bridge between public school systems, school-age programs, families and the public. Policymakers, government agencies and planners might use the competencies to guide program direction and enhance professionalism in the field.

This document can be used in a variety of ways throughout the school-age or youth program. Copies of *The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Out-of-School Time Program Practitioners* should be available in all programs and accessible to all adults who work with school-age children and youth. These competencies will encourage adults who work with school-age children and youth to grow in their profession as a school-age practitioner. The competencies can also provide a link between training, technical assistance for program providers and the foundation for future college coursework.

# HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

In 2008, a workgroup created The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners. Since then the early childhood community has utilized core competencies to guide the professional development of early childhood practitioners. Since children older than 5 have different needs than early childhood children, there has been a demand for the development of core competencies for adults working with older children.

A workgroup of representatives from the school-age and youth care community met monthly for more than a year to complete school-age competencies. The workgroup included representatives from the school-age workforce, the Child Care Resource and Referral Association, Oklahoma Tribal Child Care Association, The Oklahoma Afterschool Network, The Oklahoma Afterschool Association, and Department of Human Services Child Care Services. The expertise and passion of these representatives drove the production of this document. Quality school-age programs equal positive outcomes for children's physical, social and emotional development. Children who do not have quality school-age care may experience negative outcomes. Children and youth who are unsupervised after school, or who participate in intermittent and unstructured programs, experience negative outcomes with math achievement, work habits, task persistence and social skills (Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce, 2007; U.S. Department of Justice, 2001).

The workgroup first identified the levels of competency for the document and their definitions. After reviewing documents related to school-age core competencies and the Oklahoma Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners, the core content areas and rationale for the content areas were chosen for the document. The workgroup created goals specifically for the development of this document. They are as follows:

1. Create a research-based, age-appropriate document that is applicable to the professionals working in the entire school-age community.
2. Apply and implement best practices.
3. Define school-age practitioners as individuals who work with children/youth ages 5 and older.
4. Create a foundation of professional development and educational options.

While conducting research and reviewing various school-age core competencies, the workgroup used the following documents as the focus for most of the research:

- National Afterschool Association Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals
- Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals
- Minnesota School-Age and Youth Care Practitioners
- Oklahoma Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners

The workgroup used the National Afterschool Association document as a starting point and model. Thus, The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Out-of-School Time Program Practitioners are a composite of what the workgroup determined to be aligned with current standards and best practices related to school-age programs in Oklahoma.

Each month the workgroup reviewed key skills and abilities that could apply to everyone working with school-age children and youth. The workgroup kept in mind that practitioners work with school-age children and youth in many different settings and have many different roles. The competencies developed intentionally include all types of programs available to children ages 5 and older. It is important to note that some programs may care for children younger than 5 years of age. Practitioners who work with younger children can use both The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners and The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Out-of-School Time Program Practitioners when working to provide quality programs for the children and youth of Oklahoma.

Various program providers, teachers, educators, government officials, and early care and education stakeholders received the initial draft of the competencies for review and feedback prior to distribution to the complete out of school time program community. The competency document includes a feedback form to receive comments and concerns from those who utilize the competencies. These comments will be used for continuous review and revisions to the competencies.

The Oklahoma core competencies can be used not only as a foundation for professional development in the state, but also as a guide to other activities:

AUDIENCES	POSSIBLE USES
<b>Providers, practitioners and teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assess their own skill levels in various content areas</li> <li>▪ Determine their strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>▪ Plan for their own professional development (workshops, seminars, training and coursework)</li> <li>▪ Review each core competency area for opportunities to implement best practices into their school-age or youth care program</li> </ul>
<b>Supervisors, directors and program administrators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Write job descriptions, interviewing, hiring, planning staff orientation/training, conducting staff evaluations</li> <li>▪ Create job education requirements</li> <li>▪ Assist with staff development plans and personnel policies</li> <li>▪ Establish salary scales based on demonstrated competency and/or education</li> </ul>
<b>Training and training organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluate current offerings and plan educational opportunities that meet various content areas</li> </ul>
<b>Federal, state and local agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop and implement programs that will enhance professionalism in the field</li> </ul>
<b>Public education (K-12), families and communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Better understand what children and youth are learning in school-age programs</li> </ul>

## DEFINITION of LEVELS

The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Out-of-School Time Program Practitioners are divided into three levels of competency. The levels establish a range from beginning skills needed to enter the field to a higher level of educational training and varied experience. Professionals may have skills at varying levels in different competency areas. The variance may be due to experiences, maturity or knowledge unique to that particular competency. Trainers and technical assistance providers for children and youth programs may have additional set of core competencies that include skills for providing adult education, transfer of learning, culture and diversity, training delivery skills, coaching and mentoring. Each level is intended to be cumulative. For example, a professional working at Level 3 has knowledge and skills to meet the competencies at Levels 1, 2 and 3.

LEVEL	DEFINITION
Level 1-Entry level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Minimal training with little or no experience.</li></ul>
Level 2-Intermediate level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Foundational knowledge and skills with some experience.</li></ul>
Level 3-Advanced level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Advanced knowledge and experiences with leadership skills and administrative abilities.</li></ul>



## **DESCRIPTION OF CORE CONTENT AREAS:**

The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Out-of-School Time Program Practitioners have been broken into eight content areas. Each content area describes the knowledge and skills practitioners need when working with children and youth ages 5 through 12, families, and the out-of-school time community as a whole. The content areas support children and youth from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds including children and youth who may have a special need. Language specific to cultural diversity as well as youth engagement has been included in the content areas as these subjects can be found in all aspects of out-of-school time program knowledge and development. The areas also overlap, as all knowledge and practice are interrelated. They are in no particular order and should be seen as equally important.

### **Child and Youth Growth and Development**

Practitioners need to know and understand the typical benchmarks for growth and development. They participate in ongoing learning and reflection, and use this knowledge to provide a program that meets the multiple needs of children and youth. Best practice is to support the nature of each child and youth by including all areas/domains. This includes cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and is inherently intertwined within the context of family and culture.

### **Health/Wellness, Safety and Nutrition**

Practitioners understand that children and youth have a greater chance to fully develop socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically when their health, safety and nutritional needs are met. They ensure safety, promote sound health practices, recognize and respond to suspected child abuse and neglect, and provide nutritious meals and snacks.

### **Child and Youth Observation and Assessment**

Practitioners use observation and assessment to obtain information for appropriate program planning, establish outcomes for individuals and groups, and determine a child and youth's need for extra support. They use assessments that are systematic, ongoing, and are developmentally, linguistically and culturally responsive.

### **Family, School and Community Relationships**

Practitioners work collaboratively with families, schools and agencies/organizations to meet the needs of children and youth and to encourage the community's involvement with child and youth development. They build on respectful, reciprocal partnerships across settings to promote optimal development for children, youth and families to enhance the quality of afterschool and youth development services. Practitioners understand families take many forms, and respect and celebrate the diversity of values, strengths, customs and traditions.

### **Learning Environments and Curriculum**

Practitioners create a high-quality learning environment and implements age-appropriate curricula and program activities that meet each child and youth's needs, capabilities and interests. They understand and utilize strategies that are characteristic of high-quality environments such as consistent schedules and routines, offering interesting materials and activities appropriate to the age group, and arranging the space to enhance learning.

### **Interactions with Children and Youth**

Practitioners recognize the importance of establishing supportive relationships that guide children and youth as individuals and as a part of a group. These relationships support the development of self-regulation, self-concept, coping mechanisms, and positive interactions with their peers and adults.

### **Program Planning and Development**

Practitioners establish, implement, evaluate and enhance operation of a school-age, youth, or out-of-school time program. Program managers serve as role models around professional development by building healthy relationships with colleagues and families, and providing developmentally appropriate practices, connecting with, and utilizing resources. Practitioners solicit input from children and youth, staff, families and the community to guide continuous program improvement.

### **Professional Development and Leadership**

Practitioners serve children, youth and families in a professional manner and participate in the community as a representative for school-age and youth development. They identify themselves as leaders and professionals in the field of school-age and youth development and act ethically. They are committed to continuous learning and advocate for best practices and policies for children and youth. Program managers support practitioners in professional development. Practitioners build professional relationships with colleagues.

## **DISPOSITIONS**

The National Afterschool Association dispositions and code of ethics were utilized during the creation of the Oklahoma School-Age Core Competencies. The workgroup used the National Afterschool Association document as a starting point and model for the core competencies. (Adapted from The National Afterschool Association “Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth”)

Every profession has a set of attitudes, beliefs and perspectives that distinguish its members as a group. Together they are called “professional dispositions.” The afterschool and youth-development profession also has dispositions that are highly valued among its members.

Oklahoma believes dispositions are inclusive of all levels of practitioners who work with school-age children and youth, covering all content areas of the core competencies. Dispositions describe how a person perceives his or her work rather than what he or she knows or does. Dispositions should be a continuous effort for all personnel, both veterans and newcomers to the field; all adults who work with school-age children should strive to exhibit all of the following dispositions:

- Delights in and is curious about children and youth and how they grow and learn
- Shows warmth, caring and respect for each child and youth as an individual
- Appreciates and supports the unique, vital role of family, school and community
- Values ongoing professional development and continually seeks ways to increase one’s knowledge and skills that will support development and learning in children and youth

- Reflects on the personal beliefs and values that influence his or her attitudes and practices
- Recognizes and values the diversity found among children and youth, their families, and in the world around them, and understands that diversity impacts all areas of practice
- Values and nurtures imagination, creativity and learning through exploration, both in children and youth and in herself or himself
- Demonstrates responsible professional and personal habits in working and interacting with others
- Responds to challenges and changes with flexibility, perseverance and cooperation
- Communicates clearly, respectfully and effectively with children, youth and adults
- Recognizes that quality out-of-school programs support families, children and youth, and bridge the gap between school and home

## CODE OF ETHICS

A code of ethics is a set of standards that offers guidance to employees on the appropriate ways to behave in a place of business. School-age practitioners should always keep in mind their responsibility to promote ethical behavior while caring for children. The code of ethics promotes high standards of practice while establishing a framework for professional behaviors and responsibilities. The NAA Code of Ethics outlines personal and professional excellence encouraging the professional development of those working in the afterschool field.

- Assumption I – Ethical dilemmas will occur
- Assumption II – The manner in which ethical situations are handled has a direct impact on the individuals involved
- Assumption III – Real-life ethical dilemmas are rarely easy

Often the best ethical course of action to take is not obvious. One important value may contradict another. It is our professional responsibility to work with those involved to find the most ethical action to take. Above all, we will bring NO harm to any child. We will participate in practices that respect and do not discriminate against any child by denying benefits, giving special advantages or excluding from program activities on the basis of his or her race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, language, ability or their status, behavior or family beliefs.

The NAA Code of Ethics states: “The purpose of the NAA Code of Ethics is to raise awareness of our personal commitment to ethical conduct as we carry out our professional responsibilities, conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct. Our Code of Ethics adheres to the highest standards of integrity and honesty in all public and personal activities to inspire public confidence and trust in the afterschool profession.”

More information on the NAA Code of Ethics can be found at the NAA website: <http://naaweb.org/>.



# Child and Youth Growth and Development



# CHILD AND YOUTH GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Practitioners need to know and understand the typical benchmarks for growth and development. They participate in ongoing learning and reflection, and use this knowledge to provide a program that meets the multiple needs of children and youth. Best practice is to support the nature of each child and youth by including all areas/domains. This includes cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and is inherently intertwined within the context of family and culture.

<b><i>Level 1-Entry level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 2-Intermediate level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 3-Advanced level</i></b>
<b><i>Minimal training with little or no experience</i></b>	<b><i>Foundational knowledge and skills with some experience</i></b>	<b><i>Advanced knowledge and experiences; has leadership skills and administrative abilities</i></b>
1.1 Enjoys children and youth and engages in safe, responsive and appropriate conversations and interactions	2.1 Understands how teacher and children and youth relationships and conversations influence growth and development	3.1 Designs and analyzes programs that promote healthy relationships among families, children and youth, and all staff; provides guidance to promote appropriate conversations and interactions
1.2 Recognizes that all children and youth learn and develop through experiences, active participation and play	2.2 Creates activities and environments that provide all children and youth opportunities to learn and develop through experiences, active participation and play	3.2 Analyzes, evaluates and modifies program activities and environments to ensure they are appropriate for optimal development and learning
1.3 Recognizes that children and youth grow and develop at different rates with individual needs, temperaments, characteristics and abilities	2.3 Demonstrates knowledge of basic benchmarks for growth and development through program planning and implementation	3.3 Integrates information on growth, development, learning patterns, diverse abilities and multiple intelligences and applies to practice

<p>1.4 Recognizes children and youth are diverse and values different personalities, temperaments and cultural differences</p>	<p>2.4 Supports and practices inclusion by adapting care and education to meet the diverse needs of children, youth and families</p>	<p>3.4 Designs and evaluates programs that integrate knowledge of inclusive practice and facilitates interventions that support children, youth and families; advocates for policies that reflect inclusive practices</p>
<p>1.5 Recognizes current youth and pop culture such as the use of technologies, vocabulary, clothing and music and responds appropriately</p>	<p>2.5 Understands and respects current youth and pop cultures; collaborates with children and youth to include their interests when planning program activities</p>	<p>3.5 Monitors and reviews program planning with appropriate standards and connects teaching and learning experiences to current youth and pop cultures</p>
<p>1.6 Participates in the implementation of curricular activities that are inclusive and influenced by child and youth culture and voice</p>	<p>2.6 Develops the capacity for self-reflection, communication, empathy and appreciation of diverse opinions and cultures in children and youth</p>	<p>3.6 Analyzes and reflects on organizational culture and implements changes that demonstrate the value and need for child and youth leadership, voice, engagement, and empowerment</p>





Health/Wellness, Safety and Nutrition



## HEALTH/WELLNESS, SAFETY AND NUTRITION

Practitioners understand that children and youth have a greater chance to fully develop socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically when their health, safety and nutritional needs are met. They ensure safety, promote sound health practices, recognize and respond to suspected child abuse and neglect, and provide nutritious meals and snacks.

<b><i>Level 1-Entry level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 2-Intermediate level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 3-Advanced level</i></b>
<b><i>Minimal training with little or no experience</i></b>	<b><i>Foundational knowledge and skills with some experience</i></b>	<b><i>Advanced knowledge and experiences; has leadership skills and administrative abilities</i></b>
<b>HEALTH AND WELLNESS</b>		
1.1 Participates in physical activities with children	2.1 Ensures children and staff have opportunities for daily active play indoors and/or outdoors	3.1 Educates and supplies staff with resources that promote opportunities for physical activity
1.2 Recognizes the importance of modeling a healthy lifestyle to include activity, nutrition, rest and hygiene	2.2 Encourages and models a healthy lifestyle to include activity, nutrition, rest and hygiene	3.2 Designs and implements policies that reinforce positive health practices; provides resources to families and communities about maintaining healthy lifestyles
1.3 Practices appropriate techniques to prevent communicable disease, including hand-washing, cleaning and sanitizing	2.3 Demonstrates techniques to prevent communicable disease in a variety of environments	3.3 Designs, assesses and modifies healthy environments and procedures to protect the health of children, youth and adults

1.4 Uses appropriate practices to avoid contact with and control of blood-borne pathogens and bodily fluids	2.4 Understands and explains appropriate practices to avoid contact with and control of blood-borne pathogens and bodily fluids	3.4 Develop practices and procedures and evaluate them to ensure compliance with national standards, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1.5 Observes children and youth daily for signs of physical/mental health and responds according to established program policies and procedures	2.5 Assesses children and youth's well-being and if situation requires, determines next appropriate actions	3.5 Implements a plan for children's and youths' physical/mental health; communicates with families and links them with outside resources
1.6 Understands appropriate procedures for handling and administering medications, and maintaining confidential health records	2.6 Implements proper procedures when administering medications and maintains documentation; communicates appropriately with families	3.6 Ensures program procedures are appropriate and provides training in response to program needs; evaluates health and wellness information and integrates it into daily programming
<b>SAFETY</b>		
1.7 Recognizes, maintains and follows safe practices for indoor and outdoor areas	2.7 Creates, assesses and adapts indoor and outdoor areas for safe use	3.7 Applies current theories and best practices relevant to environmental safety in policy development
1.8 Identifies safe use of indoor and outdoor equipment and materials	2.8 Monitors safe play and the appropriate use of indoor and outdoor equipment and materials	3.8 Evaluates and maintains indoor and outdoor equipment and materials to ensure safety
1.9 Provides attentive, continuous supervision appropriate to the age of children and youth, the activity and the setting	2.9 Considers supervision and safety when planning activities and monitors and adapts to changes in the environment	3.9 Maintains and directs best practices in attentive, continuous supervision; communicates safety procedures with children, youth, staff and families

<p>1.10 Follows policies and procedures for emergency such as fire, weather and security threats</p>	<p>2.10 Creates a safe environment and implements emergency procedures as needed</p>	<p>3.10 Develops policies and procedures for emergencies and collaborates with staff, families and community partners to ensure the safety of children and youth</p>
<p>1.11 Responds immediately and sympathetically to an injury and follows basic first aid procedures</p>	<p>2.11 Ensures proper first aid procedures are followed; practices preventive measures to avoid injuries and follows procedures for documentation</p>	<p>3.11 Designs and implements appropriate procedures for prevention, documentation and reporting of accidents or injuries; educates children, youth and staff about safe practices</p>
<p>1.12 Identifies and/or recognizes signs of suspected child abuse and neglect; follows Oklahoma state law and program procedures for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect</p>	<p>2.12 Maintains current contact agency information and follows proper procedures for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect; provides a safe environment for children and youth that encourages communication</p>	<p>3.12 Analyzes and applies current theory to policies that educate families about the prevention of child abuse and neglect; assists families with locating community resources</p>

<b>NUTRITION</b>		
1.13 Recognizes and supports the needs of children and youth for a healthy diet including the need to drink water frequently	2.13 Provides opportunities for children and youth to engage in healthy eating practices, and have access to drinking water	3.13 Articulates and advocates for nutrition and applies best practices in policies; educates staff, youth and families regarding healthy eating practices
1.14 Follows appropriate program procedures for food and nutrition	2.14 Encourages healthy food options and considers food allergies, dietary restrictions and sensitivities when planning meals, snacks and activities	3.14 Assesses and adapts program's nutrition plan; collaborates with families to provide alternative menus and activities to meet food and nutrition needs
1.15 Follows regulations for safe and sanitary food storage, preparation, serving and clean-up	2.15 Plans and provides for safe and sanitary food storage, preparation, serving and clean-up	3.15 Assesses programs nutritional plan for health hazards, adapts practices accordingly, and ensures program compliance



# Child and Youth Observation and Assessment



# CHILD AND YOUTH OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

Practitioners use observation and assessment to obtain information for appropriate program planning, establish outcomes for individuals and groups, and to determine a child and youth's need for extra support. They use assessments that are systematic, ongoing and are developmentally, linguistically and culturally responsive.

<b><i>Level 1-Entry level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 2-Intermediate level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 3-Advanced level</i></b>
<b><i>Minimal training with little or no experience</i></b>	<b><i>Foundational knowledge and skills with some experience</i></b>	<b><i>Advanced knowledge and experiences; has leadership skills and administrative abilities</i></b>
1.1 Recognizes that children and youth develop and grow at different rates and assists with observations	2.1 Understands the range of behaviors of children and youth in the context of typical growth and development and uses age-appropriate expectations as the basis for observation and planning	3.1 Communicates the importance of utilizing observation as a tool for the basis of planning age-appropriate activities
1.2 Follows program procedures to observe children and youth	2.2 Assists with the collection of data about growth, development, and/or learning and recognizes that these are ongoing processes	3.2 Collaborates with other professionals to interpret observation and assessment information to develop strategies, services and supports for children and youth
1.3 Maintains confidentiality regarding each child and youth's development and/or behaviors	2.3 Communicates findings from observations with families, staff and educators; follows policies for documentation of information and confidentiality	3.3 Establishes criteria, procedures and documentation methods for observation, assessment, accommodation and confidentiality



<p>1.4 Recognizes behavioral, environmental and cultural factors that may affect children and youth and addresses information with supervisors</p>	<p>2.4 Understands and accommodates the behaviors of children and youth in the context of culture and normal growth and development</p>	<p>3.4 Articulates how behavioral, environmental and cultural factors affect observation and evaluation of children and youth</p>
<p>1.5 Recognizes that observation and assessment are ongoing processes and assists with the collection of information about growth, development and learning</p>	<p>2.5 Collects and organizes information to measure child and youth outcomes while following appropriate procedures for observation, assessment and referrals</p>	<p>3.5 Develops a plan that utilizes assessment information to improve program planning and modify individual learning experiences</p>



# Family, School and Community Relationships



## FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Practitioners work collaboratively with families, schools and agencies/organizations to meet the needs of children and youth and to encourage the community's involvement with child and youth development. They build on respectful, reciprocal partnerships across settings to promote optimal development for children, youth and families to enhance the quality of afterschool and youth-development services. Practitioners understand families take many forms, and respect and celebrate the diversity of values, strengths, customs and traditions.

<b><i>Level 1-Entry level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 2-Intermediate level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 3-Advanced level</i></b>
<b><i>Minimal training with little or no experience</i></b>	<b><i>Foundational knowledge and skills with some experience</i></b>	<b><i>Advanced knowledge and experiences; has leadership skills and administrative abilities</i></b>
<b>RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES</b>		
1.1 Communicates respectfully and positively with families from a variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds	2.1 Communicates with family members about program, activities, child's development, services and resources	3.1 Partners, plans and communicates to enhance family support and participation
1.2 Develops and maintains open, friendly cooperative relationships with families	2.2 Supports cultural differences and diverse family structures in relationships with families	3.2 Creates structures to bridge relationships between families, the program and schools
1.3 Respects choices and goals families make for their children	2.3 Involves families in all aspects of the program including visits, special events, parent education, volunteering and decision-making	3.3 Reviews the effectiveness of family involvement activities and recommends changes

1.4 Acknowledges and values varying structures, cultures, conditions and traditions of families	2.4 Demonstrates knowledge of and respect for variations across cultures and family structures, in terms of family expectations, values and child-rearing practices	3.4 Evaluates and adjusts programs to meet the various needs of families with respect to cultures, values and structures
<b>RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS</b>		
1.5 Contributes to positive relationship with schools	2.5 Establishes rapport with school personnel and communicates information back to the program to better meet individual needs of children and youth	3.5 Develops a partnership and establishes procedures for sharing information between the program and schools
<b>RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITIES</b>		
1.6 Follows program guidelines when working with volunteers and community partners	2.6 Ensures guidelines and procedures for volunteers and community partners are being implemented and consistently followed	3.6 Establishes procedures and program guidelines for volunteers and community partnerships
1.7 Recognizes cultural differences within the community	2.7 Connects teaching and learning approaches to the experiences and cultures of the community	3.7 Builds relationships with culturally relevant organizations and other community partners
1.8 Recognizes and uses the community as a resource to support and assist families and enhance programming for youth	2.8 Uses community resources to support and assist families and enhance programming for children and youth	3.8 Participates on community advisory councils and boards when applicable



# Learning Environments and Curriculum



# LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND CURRICULUM

Practitioners create a high-quality learning environment and implements age-appropriate curricula and program activities that meet each child and youth’s needs, capabilities and interests. They understand and utilize strategies that are characteristic of high-quality environments such as consistent schedules and routines, offering interesting materials and activities appropriate to the age group, and arranging the space to enhance learning.

<i>Level 1-Entry level</i>	<i>Level 2-Intermediate level</i>	<i>Level 3-Advanced level</i>
<i>Minimal training with little or no experience</i>	<i>Foundational knowledge and skills with some experience</i>	<i>Advanced knowledge and experiences; has leadership skills and administrative abilities</i>
<b>CREATING A DEVELOPMENTALLY AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM</b>		
1.1 Recognizes that children and youth learn best through fun, engaging, hands-on experiences, relationships and play	2.1 Supports and encourages the participation of children and youth in a variety of activities, experiences and social interactions	3.1 Collaborates with other agencies to maximize opportunities for children and youth
1.2 Recognizes the importance of providing a developmentally and culturally appropriate and safe learning environment	2.2 Creates an engaging, physically and emotionally safe, inclusive environment to encourage play, exploration and learning across developmental domains	3.2 Articulates, evaluates and/or applies current theories, research, resources and policies related to the design of curriculum and learning environment



1.3 Understands that the physical space/environment can impact teaching and learning	2.3 Uses appropriate equipment, devices and technology in support of teaching and learning when considering physical space/environment	3.3 Designs policies and provides knowledge in appropriate usage of physical space, learning materials, technology and media with children and youth
1.4 Follows daily routine, lesson plans and curriculum plan	2.4 Provides sufficient time in the schedule for a balance of activities; moves smoothly from one activity to another	3.4 Teaches, mentors and coaches others about how to design and adapt curriculum to meet the needs of all learners
1.5 Recognizes the importance of including children and youth in planning activities and providing them with choices	2.5 Develops strategies that allow children and youth to participate in curriculum-planning in order to build on their interests and preferred activities	3.5 Mentors and coaches staff to develop strategies that allow children and youth to participate in curriculum planning
1.6 Involves children and youth in a variety of activities with appropriate supervision	2.6 Provides an engaging, physically and emotionally safe, inclusive environment to encourage play, exploration, and learning across developmental domains	3.6 Reflects on the effectiveness of learning environments and curriculum to meet individual needs, interests, development and skill levels, while making appropriate accommodations
1.7 Encourages children and youth to accept leadership opportunities (e.g., lead a group or mentor an individual)	2.7 Provides leadership opportunities for all children and youth	3.7 Develops strategies that support the roles of communities, families and children and youth when planning leadership opportunities

<b>PROMOTING PHYSICAL, SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT</b>		
1.8 Participates in a variety of activities that develop physical, social/emotional and cognitive skills	2.8 Creates and adapts cognitive and physical motor activities and interactions to support diverse needs, abilities and interests as well as social/emotional development	3.8 Evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of physical, social/emotional, and cognitive development activities and interactions
1.9 Models appropriate social interactions and healthy behaviors	2.9 Provides activities and interactions that promote appropriate social interactions, problem-solving and conflict resolution	3.9 Develops and implements strategies that emphasize and enhance development of social skills, relationships, real-life skills, citizenship and leadership development
1.10 Models recognition and expression of feelings and encourages appropriate emotional expression	2.10 Guides children and youth in expressing their feelings and asserting themselves in socially acceptable ways	3.10 Articulates, evaluates and applies current theories and research related to promoting social/emotional development
1.11 Encourages children and youth to ask questions for understanding, and practices active listening	2.11 Uses open-ended questions in communication with children and youth	3.11 Evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of communication for groups and individuals
1.12 Understands that change, stress and transition affect social/emotional development and behavior	2.12 Recognizes individual social/emotional development, the impact of change, stress and transition; adapts activities for the children and youth	3.12 Consults with families and connects them to community resources, including mental health resources, to provide families with additional assistance when needed

1.13 Appreciates how children and youth develop a sense of self and acknowledges their efforts and accomplishments	2.13 Provides opportunities for children and youth to develop a sense of identity, independence, interdependence, empowerment and responsibility for self and the group	3.13 Demonstrates leadership in establishing partnerships with community organizations that stimulate a positive sense of self
<b>PROMOTING LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT</b>		
1.14 Engages in everyday conversation with children and youth	2.14 Offers a variety of communication opportunities that meet the individual interests and skill levels of all children/youth, including those from diverse cultures and those with special needs	3.14 Evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of language and communication activities and interactions
1.15 Models appropriate and respectful communication skills in a variety of ways	2.15 Encourages children and youth to use appropriate verbal and nonverbal means of communicating thoughts and feelings	3.15 Develops and teaches strategies for integrating communication development into all curricular areas
1.16 Understands that building communication skills is relevant to all curricular areas	2.16 Provides an environment that is conducive to the exploration and development of communication skills	3.16 Incorporates communication skills into all curricular areas (e.g. recreation and fitness, academic support, life skills, and personal growth and development)

<b>PROMOTING CREATIVE EXPRESSION</b>		
1.17 Encourages children and youth to try new activities	2.17 Provides an environment where children and youth feel free to explore and develop their creative skills	3.17 Teaches, coaches and mentors others about the importance of integrating creative activities into all curricular areas
1.18 Uses equipment and materials in a variety of ways to encourage imagination and creativity	2.18 Provides time and material for spontaneous, unstructured and self-directed activities	3.18 Adapts creative activities and interactions to support diverse needs and abilities
1.19 Recognizes the value of the process of creative expression as well as the product	2.19 Encourages creative expression through appropriate documentation and exhibition (e.g., displaying, publishing and creating portfolios)	3.19 Evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of creative activities
1.20 Recognizes and supports individual expression, including cultural influences	2.20 Incorporates activities for self-expression that reflect diverse cultural traditions	3.20 Educates families and others about the importance of individual creative expression

# Interactions With Children and Youth



## Interactions with Children and Youth

Practitioners recognize the importance of establishing supportive relationships that guide children and youth as individuals and as a part of a group. These relationships support the development of self-regulation, self-concept, coping mechanisms, and positive interactions with their peers and adults.

<b><i>Level 1-Entry level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 2-Intermediate level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 3-Advanced level</i></b>
<b><i>Minimal training with little or no experience</i></b>	<b><i>Foundational knowledge and skills with some experience</i></b>	<b><i>Advanced knowledge and experiences; has leadership skills and administrative abilities</i></b>
<b>PROVIDING INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE</b>		
1.1 Follows established guidelines for supervision and behavior management	2.1 Utilizes developmentally appropriate practice when addressing behaviors or situations	3.1 Creates and ensures an environment with clear written and practiced group agreements and conflict resolution processes
1.2 Builds rapport and establishes relationships with individual children and youth (e.g., addresses participants by name and knows their basic interests)	2.2 Maintains a trusting relationship with each child and youth by providing physical and emotional security	3.2 Communicates the importance of building rapport to improve relationships with children and youth
1.3 Models and practices positive attitude and respect for children and youth, self and others	2.3 Uses strategies to assist children and youth in learning to express emotions, solve problems and make decisions in positive ways	3.3 Develops policies for effective child and youth guidance and support
1.4 Interacts with children and youth in a positive, nurturing manner while maintaining appropriate emotional and physical boundaries	2.4 Establishes, communicates and monitors guidelines for interactions that would cause physical and or emotional harm to children and youth	3.4 Articulates, evaluates and/or applies theories of child and youth growth and development to improve guidance and support techniques

1.5 Assists children and youth in making responsible decisions regarding actions and behavior	2.5 Understands that there are reasons for the behavioral issues of individuals and responds appropriately	3.5 Develops individual guidance plans using relevant professionals for support as needed
<b>ENHANCING GROUP EXPERIENCES</b>		
1.6 Provides consistent rules and routines, while recognizing the need for flexibility	2.6 Understands the role of organization and flexibility; adapts activities and changes in routine with clear direction and patience	3.6 Responds to the individual needs and preferences of children and youth for continued program participation
1.7 Recognizes that working with groups is different from working with individuals; considers interests, age, abilities and skill levels when grouping children and youth	2.7 Provides activities that foster cooperative group skills such as negotiation and problem-solving	3.7 Applies, articulates, analyzes and/or evaluates current theories and research related to group experiences
1.8 Maintains an inclusive, anti-bullying environment	2.8 Displays sensitivity to and reacts appropriately to bullying behaviors	3.8 Researches current theories and communicates policies and procedures to staff on ways to create a safe, anti-bullying environment
1.9 Participates in group activities and transition times in a positive, relaxed, pleasant atmosphere	2.9 Provides experiences that engage children and youth, responds to their interests, and creates a balance of meaningful activity choices	3.9 Uses observation, evaluation and direct input from children and youth to improve child and youth group experiences





# Program Planning and Development



# PROGRAM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Practitioners establish, implement, evaluate and enhance operation of a school-age, youth or out-of-school time program. Program managers serve as a role model around professional development by building healthy relationships with colleagues and families, and providing developmentally appropriate practices, connecting with, and utilizing resources. Practitioners solicit input from children and youth, staff, families and the community to guide continuous program improvement.

<i>Level 1-Entry level</i>	<i>Level 2-Intermediate level</i>	<i>Level 3-Advanced level</i>
<i>Minimal training with little or no experience</i>	<i>Foundational knowledge and skills with some experience</i>	<i>Advanced knowledge and experiences; has leadership skills and administrative abilities</i>
1.1 Recognizes and supports the program philosophy and mission statement	2.1 Communicates how practices reflect and support the program philosophy and mission statement	3.1 Identifies program philosophy and mission statement that reflects the needs and strengths of children, families and the community
1.2 Recognizes and supports specific program objectives, policies and procedures	2.2 Implements the program objectives, policies and procedures into daily practices	3.2 Develops, evaluates and revises program objectives, policies and procedures
1.3 Interacts effectively with peers, support staff, volunteers and supervisors	2.3 Communicates and works effectively with peers, support staff, volunteers and supervisors	3.3 Provides strong leadership and visionary direction that reflects and builds a strong team
1.4 Values involving children and youth in the planning process	2.4 Facilitates opportunities for child and youth involvement in program planning and evaluation	3.4 Advocates for and ensures the development of child and youth leadership in planning and evaluating the program
1.5 Participates in daily program planning	2.5 Selects and manages appropriate equipment and materials for program activities	3.5 Allocates program resources effectively to ensure program quality

1.6 Complies with program policies and procedures regarding documentation	2.6 Organizes, plans, keeps records and appropriately communicates with children, youth, family and/or staff	3.6 Analyzes records and utilizes information to make appropriate adjustments to program policies and procedures
1.7 Recognizes the importance of evaluation and assists in evaluating the program's effectiveness	2.7 Implements program evaluation and quality improvement methods and understands its purposes and limitations	3.7 Articulates, evaluates and/or applies current theories, research and policies relevant to program planning, quality improvement and evaluation



# Professional Development and Leadership



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Practitioners serve children, youth and families in a professional manner and participate in the community as a representative for school-age and youth development. They identify themselves as leaders and professionals in the field of school-age and youth development and act ethically. They are committed to continuous learning and advocate for best practices and policies for children and youth. Program managers support practitioners in professional development. Practitioners build professional relationships with colleagues.

<b><i>Level 1-Entry level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 2-Intermediate level</i></b>	<b><i>Level 3-Advanced level</i></b>
<b><i>Minimal training with little or no experience</i></b>	<b><i>Foundational knowledge and skills with some experience</i></b>	<b><i>Advanced knowledge and experiences; has leadership skills and administrative abilities</i></b>
<b>DISPLAYING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE:</b>		
1.1 Supports and complies with program policies, procedures, regulatory agencies and laws	2.1 Implements and articulates program policies and procedures, regulations and laws to parents and staff	3.1 Analyzes and communicates program policies, procedures, etc.
1.2 Interacts in a manner reflecting respect for self and others while practicing confidentiality; recognizes there is a professional code of ethics	2.2 Exhibits ethical behaviors to include confidentiality and impartiality	3.2 Advocates for professionalism and ethical responsibilities by following a professional code of ethics

1.3 Demonstrates the ability to work effectively with staff, children/youth and families	2.3 Maintains professional boundaries in relationships with staff, participants and families; participates in problem-solving on program issues	3.3 Integrates principles of program administration, organization and operation into planning and decision-making
<b>ONGOING PROFESSIONAL GROWTH</b>		
1.4 Seeks knowledge throughout interactions with other professionals	2.4 Utilizes resources related to school-age development to improve professional competence and practice	3.4 Evaluates, selects and shares resources for ongoing professional development
1.5 Identifies professional development requirements of the field and awareness of professional standards	2.5 Practices ongoing self-reflection, self-assessment, and problem-solving strategies to promote professional growth for the benefit of self and others	3.5 Evaluates, applies and articulates current theory, resources, research and policy promoting ongoing professional growth
1.6 Participates in creating and follows a professional development plan	2.6 Builds professional competence by using appropriate skills, services and resources related to the professional development plan; integrates information and professional development opportunities from staff meetings into practice	3.6 Evaluates professional development plan as needed; identifies needs and arranges opportunities for self and others' professional development
<b>LEADERSHIP ADVOCACY</b>		
1.7 Identifies the need for leadership skills (to be a voice) in the child- and youth-development field for children, youth and families	2.7 Displays leadership skills and identifies strategies for advocacy	3.7 Advocates for programs and policies that impact the overall quality of services for all children, youth and families





Glossary, Resources, Acknowledgments  
and Feedback



## **GLOSSARY** *The terms in this glossary are defined as to their use in this document.*

**Advocates** – supports or promotes a specific cause

**Analyzes** – determines the nature of parts and how they work as a whole

**Appropriate** – suitable or proper in the circumstances considering “best practice”

**Articulate** – able to clearly and effectively express ideas or thoughts

**Assessment** – a process through which evidence is gathered through observing and recording

**Best practice** – evidence-based curriculum, programs or approaches

**Children/youth** – typically, “child” refers to individuals between the ages of 5-12 years old, and “youth” refers to individuals between the ages of 13-18 years; as programs may be multi-age and development varies, these definitions are not strict but general guidelines

**Code of ethics** – principles of conduct governing an individual or a group

**Collaborates** – works in partnership with others toward a common goal

**Community** – the town, city or population group where a school-age/youth program is located; a group with common interests, beliefs or goals

**Communicates** – conveys knowledge of or information about a program, child, activity or concern

**Compliance** – conforming, submitting or adapting as required or requested

**Confidentiality** – maintain information that should be kept private

**Core competency** – foundation standard for professionalism

**Criteria** – standards on which a judgment or decision may be based

**Culture** – customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a racial, religious or social group

**Cultural competency** – holding and practicing a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that enable effective interactions with all children and youth within a cross-cultural framework

**Curriculum** – planned, sequenced program of study and daily activities based on what is developmentally/culturally appropriate for children and youth, and what is deemed important

**Dispositions** – a set of attitudes, beliefs and perspectives that distinguish members as a group

**Diversity** – the acceptance and respect of individual differences in a safe, positive and nurturing environment

**Developmentally-appropriate** – expectations or an activity that take into consideration the ages of children/youth and their individual abilities

**Documentation** – the practice of keeping records, notes and files related to work with children/youth

**Domains** – key areas of children/youth development and learning; this includes cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and is inherently intertwined within the context of family and culture

**Engagement** – meaningful participation of children and youth with opportunities to make plans and choices; adults actively participate with children and youth in shared responsibilities and in reflection

**Ensures** – makes sure, certain or safe

**Environment** – physical space (indoors and outdoors) that is safely arranged for optimal learning

**Ethics** – a set of moral principles of conduct that govern an individual or a group

**Evaluation** – a planned review of activities, program structure or staff performance

**Facilitates** – guides or assists in planning/implementing/monitoring of activities; extends learning opportunities

**Family** – all persons whom are responsible for and involved with the child/youth and who the child/youth identifies as having significant impact in their lives; “family” in this context includes any caregivers responsible for raising the child and with whom they reside; extended family, foster family, legal guardian, etc.

**Guidance** – the act or process of providing direction

**Implementation** – the action of doing; to carry out

**Inclusion** – active, intentional and ongoing engagement; full acceptance of individuals within the group

**Integrates** – combining concepts, information and ideas; make into a whole by bringing parts together

**Interaction** – give and take conversation and activities between individuals or groups

**Models** – provides an example

**Modifies** – makes changes

**Monitors** – watches with a purpose, keeps track of individuals or activities

**Open-ended** – a question or activity that is adaptable or is designed to permit spontaneous and unguided responses

**Out-of-school time** – time before school, after school, during school vacations/holidays and the summer; sometimes referred to as “extended day”

**Out-of-school time programs** – programs that operate when school is not in session, such as before, after school and school breaks, and serve children 3 years old and older who are attending or have completed pre-kindergarten or above

**Partnership** – a relationship involving close cooperation and/or collaboration between members of a group or individuals

**Policy/procedure** – a definite course or method of action to guide and determine present and future decisions

**Practitioner** – one who puts knowledge into practice to become proficient, such as a teacher, leader, director or educator

**Principle** – comprehensive and fundamental law, a primary source, standard

**Professional development** – ongoing self-assessment of knowledge, skills and abilities; the establishment of goals; plans for improvement and meeting professional goals

**Professional development plan** – a document that lists goals, skills, competencies and objectives to support continuous improvement

**Research** – collects information about a particular subject

**Resource** – a source of supply or support; ability to meet and handle a situation

**School-age/youth program** – a program that takes place during out-of-school time for children and youth, see also: Out-Of-School Time programs

**Special needs** – the specific needs (physical, social and emotional) of individual children/youth are taken into consideration when planning programs and activities

**Theory** – general principle or body of principles offered to explain observable facts, experiences or events

**Typical** – developing within a range of expected age-related abilities and norms

**Wellness** – a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity

**Youth voice** – ideas, opinions, experiences, attitudes, knowledge and actions of young people are actively sought out and vocalized by placing young people in decision-making roles to offer their insights, ideas and experiences

## RESOURCES:

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US Census Bureau. (n.d.). In American FactFinder, 2010 Single Years of Age and Sex. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml> on February 25, 2014.
- Vandell, D. L., Reisner, E. R., & Pierce, K. M. (2007). Outcomes linked to high-quality afterschool programs: Longitudinal findings from the study of promising afterschool programs. Retrieved from <http://www.gse.uci.edu/childcare/pdf/afterschool/PP%20Longitudinal%20Findings%20Final%20Report.pdf> on June 27, 2013.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The purpose of this project is to provide cohesion for the field by bringing together work that has already been developed, tested and successfully implemented that may have been revised to reflect the needs children, youth and professionals working with children and youth in Oklahoma. To that end, we have drawn heavily from existing core competency frameworks. Most substantially, the workgroup drew heavily from the following documents:

- National Afterschool Association Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals
- Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals
- Minnesota School-Age and Youth Care Practitioners
- Oklahoma Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners

## Workgroup Representatives:

Broken Arrow Public Schools

Community Afterschool Program, Norman

Edward L. Gaylord YMCA

Jenks Public Schools

Quality Rating and Improvement System, Child Care Services

Oklahoma Afterschool Association

Oklahoma Afterschool Network

Child Care Services

Oklahoma State Department of Education

Union Public Schools, Tulsa

Rainbow Fleet, Resource and Referral

Tulsa Public Schools

Kiowa Tribe

Military Child, Youth and School Services





# FEEDBACK FORM

A workgroup of representatives from the school-age community met monthly for more than a year to complete these competencies. The workgroup included representatives from nonprofit/profit school-age programs, Oklahoma Public Schools, Child Care Resource and Referral Association, Oklahoma Tribal Child Care Association, The Oklahoma Afterschool Network, The Oklahoma Afterschool Association, and Department of Human Services Child Care Services. The competencies are designed to promote early learning experiences that lead to children/youth's success.

Please provide comments based on your experience with the competencies. Provide the corresponding page number for suggested language revisions and comments. Also, note if the competencies are understandable and whether they are useful when planning coursework, designing training, creating job descriptions and expectations, or self-assessing levels of skills working with children/youth.

All comments will be reviewed by the workgroup. Revisions will be made to the competencies based on feedback and research. Thank you for your assistance.

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Name (Optional):

Job Title:

---

Program:

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care Center    | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care Home | <input type="checkbox"/> Public School    | <input type="checkbox"/> Private School         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faith Based Facility | <input type="checkbox"/> Summer Day Camp | <input type="checkbox"/> Part Day Program | <input type="checkbox"/> School-Age Program     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education    | <input type="checkbox"/> Practitioner    | <input type="checkbox"/> Trainer          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Describe) _____ |

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1. Are the competencies understandable?       Yes    Somewhat    No

Comments:

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2. Are the competencies useful?       Yes    Somewhat    No

Comments:

---

3. Are you able to use the competencies in your school-age position?       Yes    Somewhat    No

Comments:

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4. Are you able to use the competencies to help you skill progress? Yes Somewhat No

Comments:

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Please provide detailed comments. Feel free to attach extra pages if needed. Thank you for your assistance.

Page No.	Section or competency Area	Specific Comment	Specific Suggested Change (if any)

What additional guidance or resources would be helpful for you to use the Core Competencies?

Feel free to copy and distribute this form and The Oklahoma Core Competencies for Out-of-School Time Program Practitioners to co-workers and colleagues for use and review.

**Please fax this form to: 405-522-2564, or  
mail to: Department of Human Services Child Care Services P.O. Box 25352 Oklahoma City, OK 73125,  
or return by email to: [childcare.occs@okdhs.org](mailto:childcare.occs@okdhs.org)**





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