LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT STANDARD A12

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As the director of a program, it is your responsibility to provide for the needs of the children in your care, their families, and your teaching staff. For a busy director, it can be difficult to find the time to address the needs of your staff, especially in the area of professional development. However, the professional development of your teachers is vital to your overall program quality and demands careful attention.

A12. A written annual plan for professional development is prepared for each employee. [D]

The plan includes:

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	Topics identified in the employee's evaluation as needing improvement [SS]
	Topics identified in the employee's evaluation as opportunities for growth (Ex. college coursework in ECE/CD, enrollment in CDA courses, attendance at national conferences, membership in a professional organization) [SS]
	Date(s) courses completed and/or training/mentoring

It is essential to recognize the great impact quality professional development experiences can have on your program quality, staff retention, and higher ratings of job satisfaction for both teachers and directors. Teachers can develop or enhance skills in classroom management, curriculum development, communication, and any area that touches their important role as caregivers of young children. The skills and knowledge gained through quality training, ongoing education, attendance at a national conference, or membership in a professional organization can result in improved classroom practices that benefit all. Greater understanding of the doctrines of our profession leads to practices that impact quality and ownership for staff, children, and

received for each identified topic [D]

As with the children in your program, each teacher must also be developed per his or her own individual needs. Teachers deserve time and attention for their own development, and the role of the director in creating a plan is crucial. In the role of advisor, teachers will often view you as being supportive, which will enhance your relationship with each staff member. Teachers will feel respected and valued when you take the time to consider and meet their individual needs. Because individualized professional development plans target areas for improvement, areas of continued study, and areas for growth, quality development opportunities result in an increased sense of self-worth, higher job performance, and greater program loyalty. Most importantly, through increased knowledge there is the opportunity for significant gains in teacher-child interactions and teacher-child bonding.

Knowing the importance of quality training and professional development is only the first step. You may be asking yourself, "Where do I go from here?" Here are questions to ask yourself when planning professional development experiences for your staff:

- · Is this training from a quality source?
- · Have I investigated all training opportunities?

- Local resource and referral training
- State-supported training
- Online training supported by positive reviews
- Does my state offer scholarship opportunities such as TEACH?
- If local trainings are not an option, what online opportunities are available? How do you know they are achieving the content required?
- Are there ways to offer more high-quality training for more of my staff?
 - Partner with other programs in the area to fund a specific speaker.
 - Meet with other directors to share solutions and reviews.
 - Promote conference attendance.
- · Have I considered the many advantages of a variety of trainers?
 - A different approach to familiar material, possibly allowing for greater understanding of complicated information.
 - The tendency of some staff to hear information better from someone outside the program.
- Have I adequately identified individual staff training needs through the observations I've conducted for each teacher?
 - How quality trainings affect your bottom line.
- Does this training meet training guidelines for accreditation?

Aside from trainings that you identify as necessary or suggest as an area for growth, it is also crucial for staff to set and obtain professional development goals for themselves. You can provide this opportunity by allowing them to set goals they would like to achieve and having them choose corresponding professional development experiences that meet those goals. Consider having them answer these questions:

- What pushes your buttons? (What frustrates you?)
- What areas do you struggle with?
- · When do you encounter the most stress?
- What would you like to learn more about?
- What is your favorite area of curriculum or development? Would you like to take training focused on that topic?
- Do you want to further your formal education?
- What experiences have you had with formal education?
- What scholarship opportunities are available?
- What are your fears?

In addition to participating in trainings, you may identify teachers who would be willing to present the information they have learned. Provide opportunities for these individuals to present information learned from a training or conference to the whole staff. This is also a great step in their professional development. Initially, you may want to review the information to be presented to ensure accuracy and compliance with program philosophy and goals and National Accreditation Commission policies and practices.

