

Choosing Quality Professional Development

A Guide for Selecting Training to Meet Your Needs



Training is a professional commitment that will involve your time and money and may impact your future career options. Take the time to investigate and choose the training that is beneficial for you. When you call or inquire about a training program, class, or workshop, it can be helpful to have questions about the trainer and the training prepared in order to make sure you are getting the training you want and need. You need to be satisfied with the answers and with the trainer.

This information has been developed by the staff at Georgia Training Approval to help you be an informed consumer of training for early child care and education professionals. Whether you are pursuing training for yourself or are arranging professional development training for your staff, this information will help you evaluate the training opportunities available to you.

While this information pertains primarily to training you may pursue to meet the 10-hours-a-year requirement for child care licensing, you will also find that you have many options available if your goal is to complete a credential or a degree.

Questions to Ask Before You Sign Up for Training

Is the trainer qualified?

Ask about the instructor's qualifications. Include questions about the instructor's educational background, knowledge on the topic of training, years of experience as a trainer, and years of experience working with young children.

Making sure that the trainer is state-approved is one way to ensure that the training meets the standard for training set by Georgia Training Approval. In Georgia, if you work in a licensed child care center or a registered family day care home, you must have at least 10 hours of state-approved training. A state-approved trainer will have a unique code that begins with TR-BFTS-(number). If a trainer is state-approved it means that they meet the following minimum qualifications:

- ◆ A Bachelor's Degree in child development, early childhood and/or related study
- ◆ Experience in the early child care field
- ◆ Training or education in how adults learn and how to facilitate learning

What is the training about and is it something I should take?

Look for two things:

1. Is the training state-approved or from an approved entity?

All training that meets the state licensing requirement for the 10 hours of training a year must be state-approved or provided by an approved entity. State-approved means that it has been reviewed and approved by Georgia Training Approval and is identifiable by an assigned state training code (TG-BFTS-number). An approved entity training is provided through a state agency (e.g., Georgia Department of Human Resources) or a college or university that has applied for and been given an 'approved entity' status. Approved entities will have an approved entity code (AE-BFTS-number).

2. Do I need this training?

Some training is required by child care licensing. You should consult the Child Care Licensing Rules and Regulations for specific training requirements.

<http://dec.al.ga.gov/ChildCareServices/RulesAndRegulations.aspx>

To find training that meets these requirements, your needs, and/or your particular interests, look for the competency goal(s) identified for the training. The competency goal will help you decide if the topic or information covered in the training will be useful for you.

In Georgia, competencies were developed to define the specialized body of knowledge needed for early care and education professionals. The competencies create a framework on which those who work with children can build their professional development goals. There are competencies for:

- ◆ **Early Care and Education (ECE)** professionals who work with children birth through age five
- ◆ **School-Age Care (SAC)** professionals who work in after-school programs with school-age children
- ◆ **Administration (ADM)** for early care and education program administrators and directors

For each area, ECE, SAC, ADM, there are a number of competency goals. Those who work in a licensed child care center or family day care home can choose training that meets their professional needs. Through the Georgia Early Care and Education Professional Development System, this training can be documented and planned according to competency goals and levels.

Refer to the **Professional Development Competencies** and the **Competency Tools for Self-Assessment** guide available on the Georgia Training Approval website at www.training.dec.state.ga.us.

What is the cost?

Cost for training varies widely but usually averages between \$5 and \$15 per hour of training. If the training is funded by another source, it may be available for little or no cost. Make sure to ask about the cost of the training, how many hours of training the cost includes, and whether or not there is an extra charge for materials, supplies, credit, etc.

Also be sure to ask what methods of payment (cash, purchase order from your employer, check, charge, etc.) are accepted and about refund policies in the event you cannot attend a training that you have registered and paid for.

It is advised that you look around to find not only training that you can afford but also training that will meet your needs.

When and where is the training offered?

Training is offered in various locations, times and days. Look for training that best fits your schedule. Some employers offer training for their staff during their regular work times, some do not. Be sure to find out when and where the training is offered so you can decide if you are able to attend.

What format is the training?

Most training is offered in a face-to-face format. Many people prefer a face-to-face class or workshop because of the opportunities to interact more with the trainer and with others in the class. More and more opportunities are becoming available for training in other formats such as conferences, independent study, and web-based instruction. Make sure that all training you take will meet your needs. If you want the training you take to count for BFTS licensing, remember that the training **must be** state-approved or provided by an approved entity. If you are not sure, consult the Georgia Training Approval website at www.training.dec.state.ga.us or call 866-425-0220.

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As a consumer of training, you should get the training you need to support your professional growth. You should receive quality training that lives up to your expectations, is relevant to you and your job, and makes efficient use of your time, abilities, and resources.

Your options for training are many and varied. Consider what you want out of training, how much you can pay, what is accessible to you, and what type of training entity can best meet your requirements.

Where to Find Training

1. Formal Education through Technical Schools, Accredited Colleges, and Universities

Individuals may receive their professional development via a formal education path. This method of attaining knowledge not only meets your state requirements for training but also supports your personal and professional development as you progress along an educational pathway. In addition, it enhances career options and eligibility for financial assistance programs.

Courses offered at these technical schools, accredited colleges, and universities traditionally are taught over a period of months and carry some type of academic credit or continuing education units (CEUs). These courses usually lead to some type of credential, certificate, diploma, or degree.

In the past, formal education has sometimes been overlooked because it is considered too expensive or less accessible. Today, however, scholarships are available and may help eliminate some of the financial burden. There have also been many new advances in technology that allow online coursework. This type of learning is easily accessible and causes little disruption to work schedules.

If formal education appeals to you, call or contact any of the following for additional information:

- ◆ Your local college, university, or technical college
- ◆ The Georgia Association on Young Children www.gayconline.org
- ◆ SCHOLARSHIPS/INCENTIVES www.caresolutions.com
- ◆ Pell Grant 1-800-4-FED-AID 1-800-433-3243 www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/Students
- ◆ HOPE Scholarships 1-800-776-6878 www.gsfc.org/hope

2. Community-Based Training

Professional development opportunities are also available through Georgia's community-based training delivery system. This system includes:

- ◆ Independent trainers and consultants
- ◆ Child care resource and referral agencies
- ◆ Training companies
- ◆ Conferences offered by professional membership organizations

(2a) Independent Trainers or Consultants

Independent trainers or consultants are typically early childhood professionals who make all or part of their living providing training for early child care and education professionals. Many state-approved trainers list their trainings in the statewide training calendar on the **Georgia Training Approval** website at www.training.decal.ga.gov. Many independent trainers have the flexibility to provide on-site training should you request it, and, given enough time, can design a course specific to your needs.

When utilizing independent trainers or consultants, be sure to ask for a résumé, a description of the course content, and references, and obtain written verification that their training has been approved through Georgia Training Approval. If their training has been approved, they will have received an official letter of approval and an approval code. It is important to note that all approvals have a five year lifespan, so check the training expiration date on the letter. Also verify that the trainer's name is listed to teach each specific course.

(2b) Local Child Care Resource and Referral Offices and County Extension Offices

You can always look to your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency at www.gaccrra.org to find training in your area. Be sure to ask for references, a description of course content, and qualifications of all instructors. The same documentation of approval by Bright from the Start is required for training offered by Child Care Resource and Referral agencies.

(2c) Training Companies

In Georgia there are a number of companies that specialize in delivering professional development opportunities, training, and consulting services to the child care field. These companies advertise on the internet, in the statewide training calendar at www.training.decal.ga.gov, and through their own marketing campaigns.

Some companies have full-time trainers on staff, and others contract with independent trainers. Some do both. When exploring options with a training company, be sure to ask who will be delivering the training to your site, what their qualifications are, and who developed the content. Do not forget to ask for documentation of state-approval.

(2d) Conferences

Frequently, membership organizations will offer training conferences where numerous sessions are presented on topics of interest to a broad spectrum of child care providers. Just like individual training sessions, conferences can be approved through Georgia Training Approval. Check with the conference sponsor to verify the conference has received state conference approval. A maximum of six training hours may be earned at a single conference.

3. CPR, First Aid, and Fire Safety Training

CPR, First Aid, and Fire Safety training do not need to be approved through Georgia Training Approval in order to meet Bright from the Start's requirements, but this training should be obtained from a licensed or certified source.

The Bright from the Start rules and regulations for child state the following concerning CPR and First Aid: "The first aid program must be done by certified or licensed health care professionals and must deal with the provision of emergency care to infants and children." The following organizations are recommended for CPR and First Aid training:

- ◆ American Heart Association (<http://ahainstructornetwork.americanheart.org/AHA/ECC/classConnector.jsp?pid=ahaecc.classconnector.home>)
- ◆ American Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org/>)

If you are thinking about going with an agency other than the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross for CPR or First Aid training, make sure you call the certifying agency (i.e., American Heart Association, American Red Cross) to make sure the individual providing the training through the company is currently recognized as a valid First Aid and CPR provider.

For Fire Safety training, providers may contact Wanda Butler at the state Fire Marshall's office at 404-657-0831 or wbulter@sfm.ga.gov for contact information of registered Fire Safety instructors in your area.

Questions to Consider when Evaluating Training Options

Does the program description or advertisement say what you will learn?

A quality training program will have learning objectives that clearly state what you will learn as a result of the training, what you will be expected to do in the training, and what skills and knowledge you will acquire. They may be called "learning outcomes," "skill competencies," or "course objectives." They should be stated very specifically.

Are the skills and knowledge you will be expected to learn up-to-date and related to real requirements?

A quality learning program will have evidence that the course developer has current knowledge of research and information for the changing nature of the field and that there is some involvement with real providers or settings.

Is there flexibility in scheduling and delivery?

Quality training provides options for study. Are programs offered at times and places that are convenient? Do they allow enough time and flexibility so that you can work at your own pace?

Will the method(s) of instruction ensure that you can learn?

In quality training, there is variety in the teaching approaches, such as lectures, readings, demonstrations, self-directed learning, hands-on practice, and technology-based instruction. There should be enough flexibility that you can apply your preferred learning style in order to be successful. Appropriate technologies and innovative approaches should be available.

Do you know how you will be evaluated?

In quality training, there will be a variety of evaluation methods, such as written and oral tests, demonstrations, small group assignments, etc. There should be frequent feedback about your progress. You should know how success is defined and measured and how it will be assessed. And you should have a say in how success is defined for you.

Will your instructors be top quality?

Trainers should have recognized qualifications, demonstrated instructional knowledge and skills for adult learning, relevant experience and/or current knowledge in the field. You should have the opportunity to provide feedback to instructors and program organizers.

Documenting Training & Professional Development

No matter what training options you choose, you should receive documentation of both the training and your attendance. Independent trainers or consultants, as well as training companies and organizations, should present each individual who attends the training with a certificate. This certificate should include:

- ◆ Title of training
- ◆ Date of training
- ◆ Number of credit hours
- ◆ Location of training
- ◆ Trainer's name and signature
- ◆ Your name and signature

And if the training is state-approved (which it must be in order to count toward the 10 hour annual licensing requirement), the certificate should *also* include:

- ◆ Trainer code (in the format TR-BFTS-number)
- ◆ Training code (in the format TG-BFTS-number)
- ◆ Competency goal(s)
- ◆ Training level (Beginning, Intermediate, or Advanced)
- ◆ Training expiration date *Note: A training's expiration date reflects the last date the trainer is approved to provide that training; the credit you receive for attending the training **does not** expire.*
- ◆ If the training is from an approved entity, instead of a trainer code and training code, the certificate should have an approved entity code (in the format AE-BFTS-number).

Questions? Contact Us

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