

# **Instructions: Early Childhood Distance Learning Approvals**

**April 8, 2015**

## **Distance Learning Training Event Approval**

The Early Childhood Project (ECP) at Montana State University administers the Professional Development Approval System and is charged with approval of all non-college credit-bearing training in Montana for child care licensing and the Practitioner Registry that is linked to the State's quality rating and improvement system, STARS to Quality. The *Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base – A guide to professional practice: what early childhood practitioners need to know, understand and be able to do (2013)* and the *Montana Early Learning Standards (2014)* provide the standards for the ECP's review and approval of all training applications. Only specific individual courses and workshop sessions are eligible for approval. Entities or vendors offering a variety of courses must submit each course for individual approval.

### **Definition**

Distance learning in Montana is defined as any learning opportunity or professional development that is not delivered face-to-face in a classroom or early childhood program.

### **Procedures for Distance Learning Course Approvals**

The following are the distance learning approval procedures:

Training applications shall be submitted online along with the Supplemental Distance Learning Training Application form embedded in the online application at [www.mtecp.org](http://www.mtecp.org).

Applications will be evaluated by ECP and scored on the Rubric for Distance Learning Training Approval found here <http://www.mtecp.org/training.html>

Distance Learning Course applications will be reviewed by the ECP within 10 business days. If further review is necessary, the Distance Learning Review Committee will be convened. The committee will include the CP Director, ECP Professional Development Coordinator and two board members. It may take up to 8 weeks for a final decision. If the Committee is convened the training will be put into a "Under Review" status.

If an application is denied approval, the sponsor may re-submit the revised application after 90 days from the date receipt of notice of denial. Prior to re-submittal the applicant must notify the ECP in writing of their intent to revise and resubmit at which time the ECP will unlock the previous application in the database. A fee of \$50.00 per course will be charged for re-submitted applications. If denied upon resubmittal, the application will not be eligible for resubmission for 12 months from the date of receipt of notice of resubmission denial.

Courses offered for college credit from a regionally accredited institution of higher education are not eligible for approval through this process. Credit courses have undergone extensive review

and approval through the higher education process. We suggest that for courses of more than 15 hours (1semester credit) entities explore the credit option.

Course approval is valid for three years from the approval date. After three years, the course must be resubmitted for approval through the application process. Montana recognizes that excellent courses are continually revised and updated with current information, activities, and assignments based upon research, student evaluations and feedback, however that process may not alter the basic course objectives. Re-submittals must reflect changes made and resources

### **Distance Learning Trainer Approval**

Montana's Early Childhood Professional Development Approval System offers the Professional Development Specialist (PDS) Approval process for trainers and instructors in Montana. Even after a trainer is approved, the training events he or she offers must comply with Training Course Approval requirements. Therefore, approved PDS trainers automatically meet the trainer standards for a training course application.

For non-PDS approved distance learning instructors, qualifications must be provided in the individual course application for review and approval.

### **Recent Review**

Montana's distance learning approval process underwent a comprehensive analysis between May 2012 and December 2014. To inform decisions, a subcommittee of the Montana Early Care and Education Advisory Board conducted an extensive literature review on the subject of effective distance learning practices. In addition, the subcommittee reviewed national resources recently shared at NAEYC's 2012 Professional Development Institute and preliminary recommendations from the National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives (PDW Center) on the topic of distance learning practice.

### **Course Topic Restrictions**

The topics listed below are not eligible for distance learning course approval. These topics must be Montana law and practice specific, and there are currently sufficient courses to meet the training needs in these areas.

- General Infant and Toddler courses
- General Preschool Teacher courses
- Child Abuse and Neglect: Mandatory Reporting in Child Care
- Safe Sleep / SIDS
- Oral Health
- Medication Administration I and II
- Immunization Training
- Inclusion in Early Childhood Strategies I and II
- The Pyramid Model/CSEFEL Training
- Adult Learning
- Environmental Rating Scales
- Business Administration Scales / Program Administration Scales

## **Course Topic Needs**

Montana has identified specific areas of the Knowledge Base in which training is needed. We recommend that entities consider submitting courses that address the following content areas:

- Observation, Documentation and Assessment
- Family and Community Partnerships
- Diversity
- Environmental Design
- Early Childhood Curriculum (Mathematics and Numeracy, Communication and Language Development, Science, Creative Arts, Social Studies)

## **Conclusion**

Meaningful and relevant training is essential. For this reason, Montana is committed to offering only the highest quality training with the utmost probability of having a positive impact on early childhood practice for Montana's young children and their families.

While distance-based education is a viable and necessary option for early childhood practitioners who work in programs throughout Montana's wide open spaces and sparse population, the ECP is moving forward cautiously and thoughtfully as distance learning opportunities continue to be developed.