Rationale:

Child development is the foundation upon which early childhood practice is based. Because the psychomotor, socioemotional, cognitive, and linguistic developmental domains are inter-related, early childhood professionals in all types of programs (e.g., family child care homes, early childhood education centers) must comprehend both the processes of development and the adult's role in supporting each child's growth, development, and learning.

Knowledge:

Human growth, development, and learning become progressively complex over time and are influenced through a variety of experiences and interactions.

- Growth, development, and learning proceed in predictable patterns reflecting increasingly complex levels of organization across the lifespan.
- Each developmental stage has distinctive characteristics; however, progression occurs over time, building from the experiences of earlier stages.
- The psychomotor, socioemotional, cognitive and linguistic domains of development are integrated within the child so that as one area is affected, other areas are also affected.
- Development proceeds at varying rates from child-to-child, as well as across developmental domains for individual children, reflecting the unique nature of each child.
- Development and learning are lifelong processes that must be nurtured in the adults who care for children.
- Parents and family members grow and develop in their understandings of their children as learners and as members of communities outside the home.
- Community members grow in their ability to implement programs and practices that meet the developmental and learning needs of young children.
- Early childhood professionals recognize that as members of the profession, they interact with other early childhood professionals as lifelong learners.

Because growth and development are generally predictable, early childhood professionals can recognize milestones of healthy development and signs of potential delay or disability.

Children express their developing abilities, interests, and learning in a variety of ways; therefore, assessment must reflect this diversity of expression.

- Because growth, development, and learning occur in a variety of ways, documentation and assessment tools and strategies must capture this variety.
- Early childhood professionals must be able to comprehend the patterns of typical and atypical development as they observe and interpret children's developmental progress.
- Information gathered on children's growth, development, and learning is shared with early childhood professionals and with parents/guardians to provide ongoing support for continued progress or intervention.

Child development theories and research guide practice for early childhood professionals.

- Developmental theories and ongoing research on human development and learning inform professional practices in the field of early childhood development and education.
- Research in human development, learning, and teaching young children serves as a guide to planning, implementing, and reflecting on practices employed by early childhood professionals.
- Based on current research on typical and atypical development, early childhood professionals implement inclusive practices that support and maximize development and learning for all children.

Children are active learners who draw on their direct physical/sensory and social experiences to construct their own understandings of the world around them.

- Children develop a sense of competence and the ability to interact effectively in social contexts as they live and play in environments characterized by mutual respect.
- Children construct knowledge about the world in which they live through child-initiated and teacher-supported play.
- Children develop small and large motor skills through playful activity with peers and caring adults.
- Children develop communication skills as they interact with other children and with adults who play and talk with them.
- Children develop the ability to think and solve problems as they play with materials, ideas, people, and with various components of the natural environment.
- Children develop abilities to think about and respond in creative ways to the world in which they live as they use their imaginations to create new possibilities through playful activity with materials and other people.

Children are best understood within the contexts of family, culture, and society.

- Although children are unique individuals, their interactions with family members influence their development, dispositions, and learning even as children impact their families.
- Families also interact within environments and cultures, influencing and being influenced through multiple interactions.
- Early childhood professionals are aware that families and community members are vital members of the broader learning community who contribute to children's healthy growth, development, and learning.
- Society serves as a broad context in which children and their families live, providing resources and limitations that support healthy growth and development.

Practices Based on Knowledge:

Based on current theories and ongoing research in the areas of human growth, development, and learning, early childhood professionals in various care and education settings (e.g., child care centers, family child care homes) must:

1. Basic Child Development

Demonstrate knowledge of the principles and patterns of child development.

2. Typical and Atypical Development

Use knowledge of child development and learning to identify the strengths and challenges of children with typical and atypical development.

3. Individual Differences

Use practices that are responsive to the unique abilities, temperaments, learning styles, and genetic influences on young children as individuals.

4. Influences on Development

Demonstrate knowledge of the impact of family, environment, culture, and society in the development and learning of young children.

5. Strategic Facilitation of Development

Strategically facilitate development by nurturing children's active engagement in learning through playful activities.

6. Collaboration

Collaborate with other professionals, families, and community members to enhance the development and learning of all children.

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Early childhood professionals at ALL LEVELS have knowledge related to:	Professionals at Level I implement practices according to program guidelines and policies. They:	Professionals at Level II demonstrate the skills present at the previous level. In addition, they work independently and take initiative in designing environments to facilitate development. They:	Professionals at Level III demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they design, assess, and modify the learning environment to meet children's changing needs. They also model excellent practices and encourage others to develop proficiency in skills. They:	Professionals at Level IV demonstrate the skills present at the previous levels. In addition, they provide leadership for planning, implementing, assessing, and modifying the program to ensure continuous improvement. They conduct inquiry to advance the understanding of best practices for their communities. They:
1. Basic Child Development				
1.1 Developmental Patterns and Principles	Recognize basic patterns of development that characterize age groups (e.g., 0-3 mo., 4-6 mo., 6-9 mo., 9-12 mo. 12-18 mo., 18-24 mo., 24-36 mo., 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds, 5-year-olds), while also understanding that individual children do not follow these general patterns precisely	Identify physical, motor, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional milestones of development	Share information on child growth and development with other professionals and family members	Communicate major theories, research, and issues relevant to child growth, development, and learning to early childhood staff or assistants, families, and community stakeholders
1.2 Adaptation of Practices as Development Proceeds	Are aware that children of different ages and developmental levels require different methods of care, education, and guidance	Adapt practices for nurturing children as development progresses	Model for others how to adapt educational practices to facilitate development at increasingly complex and challenging levels	Share knowledge with others regarding current theories, research, and policies that enhance development and learning from birth to kindergarten
1.3 Developmental Domains	Demonstrate awareness that development occurs in different domains (e.g., physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional)	Describe the different domains of development Demonstrate awareness that development can progress at various rates in different domains	Help others understand how development occurs in different domains and that development can progress at various rates in different domains	Nurture ability in others to comprehend that rates of development vary across domains

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
1.4 Interconnectedness of Domains	Recognize that areas of development are interconnected	Understand that active learning experiences can facilitate development in more than one domain simultaneously	Use knowledge of interconnectedness of domains to: • Design holistic learning experiences that capitalize on the interconnectedness of domains to promote development • Explain the behaviors of children based on development across different domains	Share with others (e.g., family members, assistants, staff) current theories and research that explain how development is interconnected across domains and how this information can be applied in facilitating early childhood development
1.5 Stages Versus Continuous Development	Demonstrate awareness that development can be described in terms of broad stages within which development proceeds gradually and continuously	Explain how continuous incremental changes are related to broad developmental stages	Help others comprehend the educational implications of viewing development as continuous versus stage-dependent	Advocate to others practices that foster continuous developmental progression while using stages or benchmarks to guide expectations and plan curriculum
1.6 Variability in Developmental Milestones	Recognize that the age ranges in which development typically occurs are broad and overlap	Use observations, work samples, and other assessment tools to determine a child's current skills and abilities	Communicate to others how development is assessed and the implications of assessment for curriculum development	Stay up-to-date on best practices (derived from evidence-based research) for assessing developmental status, make resources available to staff for ongoing developmental assessments, and analyze date collected

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
2. Typical and Atypical Development				
2.1 Recognizing Variation As Typical	Demonstrate awareness that developmental variations and challenges occur in both typical and atypical development	Describe the normal range of variation in typical development	Identify the unique patterns of behavior that distinguish typical from atypical development	Help inform others of current theory and research on the range of variation in developmental patterns and timelines
2.2 Recognizing Atypical Development	Recognize skill levels that suggest children's development is atypical, whether being advanced or delayed in comparison to the average child of the same age	Compare children's developmental levels with typical milestones to identify whether a child's skills, behavior, and development are similar to those of most children of the same age	Know how to use observations, work samples, and other assessment tools to appropriately determine and to address current skills and abilities	Oversee the program (i.e., schools, center or family child care home), secure resources and services for developmental assessment
2.3 Adapting the Learning Environment	Recognize that the learning environment needs to be structured to support children who have special needs due to advanced or delayed development	Modify the learning environment to accommodate children's individual, unique, and special needs	Have knowledge of evidence-based best practices related to inclusion, including how to locate resources and services for children with special needs	Ensure that staff, assistants, families, and community members are informed of current trends in educating and nurturing children with special needs
2.4 Indicators of Risk	Demonstrate awareness that certain genetic and environmental factors increase the likelihood of developmental delays or disabilities	Recognize risk factors, delays or disabilities that may indicate a need for special services	Use knowledge of specific developmental delays, developmental disabilities, and risk factors to refer children for specialized services	Assist others in securing consultants to assist with assessments and curriculum adaptations for children with special needs
2.5 Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs)	With help, can integrate goals from IFSPs and IEPs into daily activities and routines	Integrate goals from IFSPs and IEPs into daily activities and routines	Participate in evaluation and assessment coupled with formulation of IFSPs and IEPs	Take responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating, and modifying policies and procedures for IFSPs and IEPs
2.6 Recognizing and Respecting Developmental Challenges	Recognize and respect developmental differences associated with physical, cognitive, emotional or social challenges	Demonstrate awareness that developmental variations and disabilities have an impact on developmental rates and patterns	Inform others about individual differences in development and learning and how such differences influence development	Share with others current research and theory on developmental variations associated with physical, cognitive, or emotional delays or challenges

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
3. Individual Differences				
3.1 Respecting Personality Differences	Recognize that children have different personalities and behavioral styles, and respect these differences	Recognize that individual differences in temperament and personality have an impact on development and require different approaches from caregivers	Plan and implement learning experiences based on knowledge of child development and observations of individual children's particular skills, interests and abilities	Take responsibility for planning, implementing, assessing, and improving program practices that are responsive to individual differences in personality, interests, and abilities
4. Influences on Development				
4.1 Influences on Development	Recognize that development is affected by genetic and environmental (including biological and cultural) factors	Demonstrate awareness that biological, maturational, and environmental factors interact to influence development	Have knowledge of current theories and research on how biological and environmental factors are related to specific developmental delays, developmental disabilities, and risk factors	Analyze and use current knowledge of biological and environmental factors to inform others about the effects of biological and environmental factors on the development of children
4.2 Family as Primary Environment	Recognize that the family is the primary source of environmental influences on development	Recognize that early childhood professionals can provide support to families within the boundaries of best practices	Create environments and experiences that are sensitive to the values and goals of the child's family	Help inform others of current evidence-based research on practices that enhance the development and learning of young children from birth to kindergarten
4.3 Stress as Environmental Factor	Recognize that behavior and development are affected when children experience stressful environmental situations	Appreciate the fact that family stress and trauma have developmental consequences and that supportive relationships play a crucial role as children cope	Identify community resources and services for families and children under stress and make referrals when needed	Take responsibility for obtaining consultation services and securing collaborative agreements with community resources for families and children under stress
4.4 Variation in Cultural Practices	Demonstrate awareness that cultural practices vary from family-to-family	Describe teaching and learning strategies that are responsive to children's cultural and linguistic diversity	Create and maintain a culturally and linguistically responsive learning environment	Critically analyze current knowledge, theories, and best practice recommendations to support each child's development and learning while being responsive to diverse families and cultures

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5. Strategic Facilitation of Development				
5.1 Role of Relationships	Are aware of the importance of engaging in safe, secure, caring, and responsive relationships with each child to promote optimal development	Create an environment that can: • Nurture emotional well-being • Serve as a secure base for children • Respond to children's needs, abilities, and interests Facilitate initiative and self-reliant exploration, of learning materials and participation in curriculum experiences Use cooperative peer learning experiences (for children who are developmentally ready) Facilitate appropriate emotional expression and emotional intelligence (e.g., helping children develop social skills and empathy)	Model and help others develop competencies for nurturing relationships that enable children to be optimally ready for learning	Help inform others of current evidence-based research on practices that enhance the development and learning of young children from birth to kindergarten
5.2 Role of Experience	Know that young children learn through direct experiences	Offer a variety of learning experiences that: • Capitalize on children's natural curiosity and desire to acquire new skills that are challenging but not overly difficult • Are matched to the child's current skill levels that have been noted through observation, child's questions, misunderstandings, etc. • Apply theories of development and experiential learning to early childhood practices from birth to kindergarten	Demonstrate awareness of the causes of developmental change (facilitation, induction, maintenance) and that some behaviors cannot or should not be induced prior to the appropriate time for development due to biological, emotional, social, or cognitive reasons	Maintain and share with others knowledge of current theory and research on: • Strategies for facilitating optimal development • Finding an optimal match between theory and practical application

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
5.3 Role of Play	Acknowledge that play provides the optimal mode for facilitating physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development by actively engaging the whole child	Describe appropriate time for playful activity versus time for adult-directed and controlled activity (e.g., safety procedures)	Articulate to parents and others why play is important to the development of young children, and assist them to understand, to provide suitable equipment and opportunities, and to support age-appropriate and different types of play that are important to development	Take responsibility for helping others organize and assess learning environments that facilitate development through a balance of child-centered play and adult-guided activities
5.4 Principles of Play	Know the importance of providing children with the time and materials to engage in playful activity	Know how to organize the physical and psychological environment to promote play, thereby, creating an environment that facilitates and enhances development	Plan and implement a variety of curricular activities that apply the principles of play in promoting development.	Advocate for excellence in programs serving young children from birth to kindergarten
5.5 Role of Adults in Play	Recognize that adults have an important role in facilitating development by engaging children in playful activities	Facilitate play by: • Setting the context (i.e., materials, time, space) • When appropriate, following the lead of the child • Supporting a playful attitude (e.g., make-believe, choice, flexible rules)	Plan and implement curriculum based on a balance of child-initiated and adult-guided experiences and on the interests of children and adults Infuse routines and required activities with an element of playfulness when possible	Provide opportunities for staff, family day care home assistants, and families to learn evidence-based best practices related to the use of playful modes of learning and how to play constructively with children

6. Collaboration

Competency	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
6.1 Collaboration on Behalf of Children	Know how to follow guidelines for implementing IFSPs and IEPs as provided by supervisor or consultants	Collaborate with consultants and parents in planning learning experiences to meet children's individual needs and interests	Work with families, community members, and early childhood professionals to advocate policies that nurture the development of all children	Analyze and use current knowledge and theories about specific developmental delays, developmental disabilities, and risk factors to advocate on behalf of young children with developmental delays and disabilities
6.2 Collaboration with Adults	Know how to work with colleagues on behalf of young children	Collaborate with others (e.g., professionals, family members, business leaders) to share reflections on strategies for enhancing the learning environment	Collaborate with peers, families, community members, business leaders, and other professionals to promote optimal developmental outcomes	Apply the principles of human development and psychology that have implications for working with families, community members, business leaders, and other professionals to promote optimal developmental outcomes