POLICY ADVISORY

Field Operations 2024 - 9

Policy: EEC Essentials 2.0
Effective Date: May 8, 2024 (staff have until June 30, 2025 to complete EEC Essentials 2.0)
Policy Link: https://www.mass.gov/guides/eecs-strongstart-online-professional-development-system

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Overview

EEC is committed to delivering professional development opportunities that support a linguistically and culturally representative workforce, reduce barriers to entry, and support ongoing professional advancement. EEC Essentials is a required training package that serves as a crucial foundation for this work.

The revisions to this policy and the related EEC Essentials training package are in response to requirements from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Care within the Administration for Children and Families. It also reflects EEC's commitment to quality improvement. This "EEC Essentials 2.0" offers enhanced content, design, engagement, and access. All courses are narrated in multiple languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, or Simplified Chinese) and offer subtitles for videos and closed captioning throughout the courses.

The revised policy will take effect May 8, 2024. EEC Essentials 2.0 is available as of April 22, 2024, and has replaced EEC Essentials 1.0. Completing EEC Essentials 2.0 is mandatory for all new staff entering the field.

All staff working in EEC-licensed or funded programs will be required to complete the EEC Essentials 2.0 training package by June 30, 2025. After completing EEC Essentials 2.0, there will be an annual requirement to complete a 3-hour EEC Essentials refresher course.

Applicability

All educators and administrators working in EEC-licensed or funded programs will be required to complete the EEC Essentials 2.0 training package. In Family Child Care (FCC) programs, the FCC licensee, certified assistants, and regular assistants, must complete the training package.

All staff that are included in the count for the maintenance of licensing ratios and group size must complete the entire package, regardless of the frequency that they work. In addition to educators and program administrators, this includes volunteers, interns, and substitutes that are counted in ratio.

In addition, all applicable staff will be required to take the EEC Essentials Refresher package annually.

- **Staff that are currently working in EEC-licensed or funded programs**
  Must complete the EEC Essentials 2.0 training package by June 30, 2025.
- **Staff that are new to working in EEC-licensed or funded programs**
  Must complete a background check and the EEC Essentials 2.0 before working with children.

EEC Essentials 2.0

There are two packages of EEC Essentials 2.0. Staff will enroll and complete the applicable package according to their program type. All packages are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Simplified Chinese.

- All applicable staff in early childhood programs **(center-based and family child care)** will enroll in and complete the 13-course package labeled "EEC Essentials for Early Childhood 2.0". This package should take approximately 12 hours.
- All applicable Afterschool and Out-of-School time **(ASOST)** staff will enroll in and complete the 11-course package labeled "EEC Essentials for ASOST programs 2.0". This package should take approximately 10 hours.

Note: Printed certificates should be available in staff records located within the program.

Monitoring

Starting July 1, 2025, EEC licensing staff will begin monitoring to ensure that the EEC Essentials 2.0 Training requirements and annual EEC Essentials Refresher training have been completed a year later (and yearly thereafter) and certificates are available in staff records on-site. A program's failure to ensure that each program staff member/assistant working directly with children and counting in the program's staff-child ratio has completed the training package may result in citations of non-compliance.

Key Updates

The following has been updated or clarified from the original EEC Essentials Policy Bulletin 2019-01 and training package.

- **Clarification of specific staff that are required to take the training.** The original policy may not have been clear that all program administrators and staff that count in licensing ratio were required to take the training.
- **EEC Essentials Training Package Updates**
  - The addition of a course entitled "Missing Children." Material for this course was dispersed throughout other courses in the training package but has been enhanced and designed into its own course.
  - The content of the courses has been enhanced to include additional material, including evidence and research base, and action steps for staff.
  - Revised courses are all narrated in all languages and include closed captioning and, when applicable, subtitles.

    - One course package certificate will be issued upon completion of the entire training package.
- **Addition of yearly requirements.** This policy adds the requirement that applicable staff take the EEC Refresher training package yearly.

Resources

The StrongStart Learning Management System is a learning management system that houses mandatory and supplemental training for early education and care program staff and can record staff completion of professional development coursework. The EEC Essentials 2.0 training package is available in the course catalog for enrollment. Help materials are available on the homepage. In addition, help is available at StrongStartPDS@mass.gov.

Additional information, including applicable policies, FAQs, and resources in multiple languages, can be found on the policy page.

Obsolete

This policy will replace EEC's EEC Essentials Training Requirements policy that was previously revised on February 1, 2020