

Professional Development Plan Webinar Q&A

Professional Development Plans

Q: What is a professional development plan?

A: A professional development plan (PDP) is a way to identify how you will meet your education requirement, in-service training, and preservice training and requirements. It is a method to outline your plan to meet your goals. The workforce registry, MERIT, will be used to identify your education pathway and as a method to track your progress.

Q: If I have a degree that is not in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or related, do I need to have a PDP?

A: If your degree is recorded in MERIT at this time, you do not need to have a PDP. DCYF is working on a pathway for those who have non-related degrees in MERIT that will recognize the related work already accomplished and help you build in the early learning content missing.

Q: Can I change my pathway after I have recorded it in MERIT?

A: Yes, you can change your mind about which pathway you choose to meet your education requirement. You'll be able to update your option in MERIT any time. Keep in mind that if you change your pathway, this does not change your timeline for meeting the education requirement.

Q: Is the pathway really my decision or does someone choose for me?

A: PDPs are individual plans set by the early learning provider. Choose the pathway you want that is the best choice for your long-term goals. Remember, not all pathways are available to all roles.

Q: Who do I contact if I need help with my PDP?

A: If you need technical assistance with selecting your pathway in MERIT, please reach out to our MERIT support team at merit@dcyf.wa.gov. To learn more about the available pathways, visit our **DCYF Professional Development Staff Qualifications website** or the **Career Planning Portal**.

Q: What roles are required to have a PDP in MERIT.

A: If you need to have education for your role and do not currently meet it, you will need to document annual progress in MERIT with your PDP. If you have met your education for your role in one of the available pathways, you will not need a PDP in MERIT. PDPs are required for those that have an education requirement that has not yet been met.

Q: What happens if I don't complete a PDP?

A: Licensors will be looking for documented annual progress after July 1, 2021. If you do not have a plan for meeting your full education requirement identified in MERIT, your licensor will follow up with you. Action will be taken by the licensor when education timelines are not met.

Q: Do I need a PDP if I want to choose the experience-based pathway?

A: If you are eligible for the experience-based pathway, you will select this option in MERIT and DCYF will verify that you meet the criteria. You will not need to do anything else. **To be eligible**, you must have:

- Seven years in a licensed facility by Aug. 1, 2024, recorded in MERIT.
- Completed all training requirements for each year (Child Care Basics and 10 in-service hours annually).
- Maintained compliance with all renewable health and safety trainings through those years (Safe Sleep, CPR, Bloodborne Pathogens, First Aid, and Food Handlers).

Q: What if I am part of the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)?

A: At this time, if you are currently on an ECEAP PDP, you will continue with your plan. The process for the licensed early learning provider will be reflected in MERIT first. DCYF is working on streamlining an aligned process for early learning programs to include ECEAP. More information will become available when this process is ready to implement.

Next Steps

Q: What is happening this fiscal year (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)?

A: DCYF licensors will check that you have selected your option for meeting your education in MERIT by June 30, 2021. This will be how you will document annual progress this year (WAC 0100). Providers must still meet the hiring education, unless otherwise approved by their licensor.

The workforce registry, MERIT, will have an indicator in spring 2021 where providers can select what option they will choose to meet the licensing staff qualifications. December's webinar went over some of these features/updates. You can **find webinar details here**.

Q: What is happening next fiscal year (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)?

A: Early learning providers will continue making progress on their PDP as indicated in MERIT. Based on the pathway you have chosen will determine your next steps in recording your progress.