Introduction
Welcome to Early Childhood: Family-Centered Services, a course that seeks to promote the development of thoughtful, knowledgeable, effective educators for a diverse society. The course provides conceptual frameworks for working with families of children from a variety of backgrounds. Course content places an emphasis on family-centered practices designed to help early childhood professionals involve and support families in the care and education of children.

This computer-based instruction course is a self-supporting program that provides instruction, structured practice, and evaluation all on your home or school computer. Technical support information can be found in the Help section of your course.

Course Materials (Online)
Title: Early Childhood: Family-Centered Services
Instructor Name: Dr. Marrea Winnega
Facilitator Name: Aumony Dahl, M.Ed.
Publisher: Virtual Education Software, inc. 2008, Revised 2012

Academic Integrity Statement
The structure and format of most distance-learning courses presume a high level of personal and academic integrity in completion and submission of coursework. Individuals enrolled in a distance-learning course are expected to adhere to the following standards of academic conduct.

Academic Work
Academic work submitted by the individual (such as papers, assignments, reports, tests) shall be the student’s own work or appropriately attributed, in part or in whole, to its correct source. Submission of commercially prepared (or group prepared) materials as if they are one’s own work is unacceptable.

Aiding Honesty in Others
The individual will encourage honesty in others by refraining from providing materials or information to another person with knowledge that these materials or information will be used improperly.

Violations of these academic standards will result in the assignment of a failing grade and subsequent loss of credit for the course.

Level of Application
This course is designed as one part of a five part series on early childhood education. Upon completion of all five courses, you will have covered all of the CDA Competencies to prepare you to take the CDA exam (applicable in certain states). This course specifically covers CDA Competencies 1-9, 12, and 13 (Check your individual state requirements), which all relate to the establishment of well-run, purposeful programs for young children that are responsive to individual needs and advance the
development of the whole child. This course is designed for anyone planning programs for young children--child-care providers, early childhood educators, and health care or social services providers, to name a few.

**Course Objectives**

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate:

- Working knowledge of the major frameworks for understanding about family systems, transitions, and diversity.
- Competence in communicating about the role of families in promoting optimal growth, development, and learning from pre-birth to age five.
- Ability to seek out appropriate local, regional and national resources when working with families facing special challenges (e.g. children who have teenaged or divorced parents, are newly immigrated, have experienced abuse/neglect and/or poverty, or have special needs).
- Skill in designing appropriate professional practices related to enhancing and assessing positive staff-parent communication and involvement.

**Course Description**

*Family-Centered Services* is a continuum of services that employ the family-centered practice approach to promote the primary goals of child welfare: safety, permanency, and well-being. A family-centered practice approach is a way of organizing and delivering assistance and support to families based on interconnected beliefs and attitudes that shape the program philosophy and behavior of personnel as they organize and deliver services to children and families.

Family-centered service is an approach to service delivery that grew out of family preservation attempts in the mid-seventies to prevent out-of-home placements of minors. Since then, family-centered services has expanded from a particular type of service to an overall philosophy for the delivery of services to families. FCS currently includes a wide range of programs from family support prevention services to family preservation, for families who are dealing with extremely difficult situations. Family support is largely a preventative service that focuses on promoting healthy family relationships and child development. A family support model may include programs such as peer support groups, Head Start, parent training, and home visitation. Family preservation, on the other hand, is more concerned with preventing family breakdown when serious problems arise by providing more intensive services that help families resolve specific issues (Fuller & Wells, 2000).

While there are several similar, yet differing, definitions of family-centered services that exist in fields such as social services, child welfare, mental health, and early childhood special education, there is consensus on the principles and values that characterize family-centered services. Descriptors such as “strengths-based, consumer driven, family systems, partnerships, empowerment, enhancement, interdependence, proactive, and collaborative relationships” are all found in many of these definitions (Pletcher & McBride, 2003).

For the purpose of this class, we will use the terms *Family-Centered Services* and *Family-Centered Practice* interchangeably, to refer to a way of working with families across service systems to enhance their capacity to care for and protect their children, and strengthen their ability to manage their own lives. Family-centered services focus on the needs and welfare of children within the context of their families and communities. These services are accessible and individualized, and are available to families that may not initially seek services.

Family-centered service providers reach out to families, conveying the message that all families can benefit from support, and that families can learn from one another.

Family-centered practice recognizes the strengths of family relationships and builds on these strengths to achieve optimal outcomes. *Family* is defined broadly to include birth, blended, kinship, and foster and adoptive families. Family-centered practice includes a range of strategies, including advocating for improved conditions for families, supporting them, stabilizing those in crisis, reunifying those who are separated, building new families, and connecting families to the resources that will sustain them in the future.

**Student Expectations**

As a student, you will be expected to:

- Complete **all** information chapters covering Family-Centered Services, showing a competent understanding of the material presented.
- Complete **all** examinations, showing a competent understanding of the material presented.
• Complete a review of any chapter on which your examination score was below 70%.
• Retake any chapter examination, after completing an information review, to increase that examination score to a minimum of 70% (maximum of three attempts). *Please note: Minimum exam score requirements may vary by college or university; therefore, you should refer to your course addendum to determine what your minimum exam score requirements are.
• Complete a course evaluation form at the end of the course.

Course Overview

Chapter 1: Introduction to Family-Centered Services
Chapter One defines what is meant by Family-Centered Services (FCS) and examines the important role it plays in Early Childhood Education (ECE). We consider the philosophy, core values, and essential elements of best practice in FCS. In addition, we identify several key principles that guide the delivery of Family-Centered Services and provide practical examples of how to implement each principle for those providing services to families.

Chapter 2: Understanding Families
Chapter Two takes a more in-depth look at how we can work together to connect the ECE profession’s standards of quality to the urgent needs of families. This chapter discusses the complexity of family dynamics by examining several factors that contribute to family diversity, such as ethnicity, race, culture, economic differences, gender role identity, religiosity, and geographic region. We discuss the practical implications of such factors and look at family strengths, functions, and structures.

Chapter 3 - Working Together: A Shared Responsibility
Chapter Three takes a closer look at several stress factors, such as family violence, substance abuse, homelessness, disability, serious illness, and immigration, that many families in crisis may face. We discuss the impact of such stressors on both family and child, and identify various ways in which early childhood educators can support and encourage them in their time of need.

Chapter 4 - Building Communities of Care
Chapter Four focuses on the need for Early Childhood Educators and care providers to provide parents with child-rearing information and support. In order to do this, we examine the critical processes for child development, discuss how to develop and implement needs assessments for families with young children, and describe the dimensions of high-quality parent education programs. This chapter also identifies critical components of parenting and discusses methods of parent education.

Examinations
At the end of each chapter, you will be expected to complete an examination designed to assess your knowledge. You may take these exams a total of three times. Your last score will save, not the highest score. After your third attempt, each examination will lock and not allow further access. Your final grade for the course will be determined by calculating an average score of all exams. This score will be printed on your final certificate. As this is a self-paced computerized instruction program, you may review course information as often as necessary. You will not be able to exit any examinations until you have answered all questions. If you try to exit the exam before you complete all questions, your information will be lost. You are expected to complete the entire exam in one sitting.

Facilitator Description
Early Childhood: Family-Centered Services has been developed by Aumony Dahl MS/ED the instructor of record. Aumony received her Master’s degree in Exceptional Children from Western Washington University. She is certified to teach in K-12 Special Education with an additional endorsement in Early Childhood Special Education. Aumony began her career working as an elementary special education teacher for several years. She is currently an instructor in the Special Education Department at Western Washington University, teaching a variety of classes on topics related to early childhood special education, students with complex special needs, assessment and evaluation, and program planning. Aumony is also a supervisor for practicum students who are training to become teachers. In addition to this course, Aumony has authored another course in this Early Childhood series called Early Childhood: Program Planning.

Instructor Description
Dr. Marrea Winnega, is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist with 20 years of experience in the field of Autism Spectrum Disorders. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology in the University of Illinois at Chicago Department of Psychiatry. She consults for schools and agencies serving individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders, including Asperger’s Disorder. She has also conducted numerous workshops, in-services, and trainings throughout the United States. Please contact Professor Dahl if you have course content or examination questions.

Contacting the Facilitator

You may contact the facilitator by emailing Professor Dahl at aumony_dahl@virtualeduc.com or calling her at 509-891-7219, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. PST. Phone messages will be answered within 24 hours. Phone conferences will be limited to ten minutes per student, per day, given that this is a self-paced instructional program. Please do not contact the instructor about technical problems, course glitches or other issues that involve the operation of the course. Please contact Professor Dahl if you have course content or examination questions.

Technical Questions
If you have questions or problems related to the operation of this course, please try everything twice. If the problem persists please check our support pages for FAQs and known issues at www.virtualeduc.com and also the Help section of your course.

If you need personal assistance then email support@virtualeduc.com or call (509) 891-7219. When contacting technical support, please know your course version number (it is located at the bottom left side of the Welcome Screen) and your operating system, and be seated in front of the computer at the time of your call.

Minimum Computer Requirements
Please refer to VESi’s website: www.virtualeduc.com or contact VESi if you have further questions about the compatibility of your operating system.

Refer to the addendum regarding Grading Criteria, Course Completion Information, Items to be Submitted, and how to submit your completed information.

Bibliography (Suggested Readings)


Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov


**Websites**

Zero to Three Organization ([http://www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org))

A primary site for information on healthy development during the first years of life.

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center ([http://www.nectac.org](http://www.nectac.org))

NECTAC is the national early childhood technical assistance center supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs.

ERIC Early Childhood Resources and Link ([http://eric.ecee.org/](http://eric.ecee.org/))

An excellent source when you need to research a topic related to Early Childhood. A large amount of information related to families is included here.

American Academy of Pediatrics ([http://www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org))

This site offers child health information to parents and professionals.

Council for Exceptional Children ([http://www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org))

A professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for people working with and advocating for students with special needs.

High/Scope Educational Research Foundation ([http://www.highscope.org](http://www.highscope.org))

This foundation is an independent non-profit research, development, training, and public advocacy organization to promote the learning and development of children.

I am Your Child ([http://www.iamyourchild.org](http://www.iamyourchild.org))
This site is primarily for students and families interested in information about infants and toddlers. The site was created by the Rob Reiner foundation in order to promote public awareness of the importance of early childhood development, largely in response to brain development research. The Foundation has developed a series of videos and CD-Roms in English and Spanish that can be purchased for $5. This is a valuable resource for sharing with parents and community members.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (http://naeyc.org)
An organization concerned with the quality of early education for young children. NAEYC provides a number of Position Statements that are important for all ECE specialists to familiarize themselves with.

Early Head Start National Resource Center @ Zero to Three (http://www.ehsnrc.org)
A large amount of information related to ECE, with some topics emphasizing family services.

Floor Time- Stanley Greenspan, M.D. (http://home.sprintmail.com/~janettevance/floor_time.htm) This site provides an overview of the work of Stanley Greenspan and is particularly relevant to class discussion of parent/child interactions in fostering emotional development.

Vort Corporation (http://www.vort.com)
This site is a company that publishes Information for Parents and Professionals working with infants and young children.

Course content is updated every three years. Due to this update timeline, some URL links may no longer be active or may have changed. Please type the title of the organization into the command line of any Internet browser search window and you will be able to find whether the URL link is still active or any new link to the corresponding organization's web home page.

Updated 9/4/14  JN