

Recognize Opportunities for Future Employment and Advancement

THERE ARE MANY career options in the human growth and development field (e.g., day care providers, teachers, and care providers for older adults). Entry-level jobs may just require a high school diploma, but teaching positions may require a bachelor's degree as well as ongoing education and training. In this unit, you will learn about the skills needed for a career in this field as well as the job conditions and opportunities for advancement.



Objectives:



1. Determine the qualities and skills needed for career success in human growth and development professions.
2. Identify factors that assist an individual in moving up the career ladder.

Key Terms:



aptitudes	environment	job duties
career analysis	goal setting	research
education and training	informational interview	salary and benefits
employment outlook	interpersonal skills	self-evaluation

Skills for a Career in Human Growth and Development

Goal setting is an important skill in the career planning process. It is an element of life-long learning that allows individuals to increase personal performance, improve motivation

and confidence, and reduce stress and anxiety. Setting goals also helps a person concentrate and focus on what is important and helps him or her to be self-directed.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

Some goals may be reached quickly, while others take years of schooling or work to achieve. Short-term goals are manageable and may be achieved in a relatively brief amount of time. They help provide a sense of direction and accomplishment toward long-term goals. Activities such as studying for a test, setting a meeting with the speech teacher, and getting a promotion all serve to reach short-term goals.

LONG-TERM GOALS

Long-term goals reflect a person's vision of the future. An individual may develop a strategy for long-term goals by setting several short-term goals.

For instance, a person's long-term goal may be to own a day care center. To reach that goal, the individual may set short-term goals of taking a child care course or getting a teacher's aide job in a day care center.

SELF-EVALUATION

Self-evaluation is an honest appraisal of your lifestyle wishes, family personal commitments, abilities, interests, aptitudes, values, and ambitions. Defining your interests, aptitudes, and abilities is a first step and a critical skill in the process of self-evaluation. Interests are activities and tasks that a person likes to do. For example, some individuals like to work with people, while others prefer to work alone. **Aptitudes** are the natural talents a person possesses and/or is able to improve. Some people have a naturally good memory; others are able to read or write very quickly; and some individuals are good at figuring out special relationships.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Personal qualities and attributes are a person's characteristics and work ethic. They are what make one employee stand out from the others. A good attitude, initiative, and integrity are essential personal qualities for a career in child care and adult care.



FIGURE 1. Child care workers who continue their education may be eligible for promotions and a higher salary.

Attitude

It is usually easy to observe if an individual has a positive or a negative attitude. A positive attitude focuses on positive issues concerning people, places, and things in the human growth and development field. A person may exhibit a positive attitude by smiling, being considerate and respectful of others, showing an interest in the job, and doing work to the best of his or her ability. A person with a positive attitude does not whine, complain, or display self-pity.

Initiative

An employee could show an employer he or she wants to be promoted by showing initiative. Behaviors that exhibit initiative include taking a leadership role, looking for better ways to do a job, seeing what needs to be done without being told, and being a self-starter. An individual with initiative also may make a good impression on co-workers and customers, show dedication to the job, and show a willingness to improve job performance.

Integrity

Integrity is the level of honesty and trustworthiness a person exhibits in his or her personal and work life. Integrity is shown by working without constant supervision, carrying out instructions, and being honest when dealing with customers and co-workers. Checking work to make sure it is accurate, complete, and finished on time is another way an employee can demonstrate integrity.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Interpersonal skills are the ability to get along with others (to cooperate), to be a team player, and to lead the group when necessary. Cooperation with co-workers and supervisors is



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Child Development Associate Credentials

Although the pay for child care careers is generally low, professionals with more education and training can expect to earn more money and have opportunities for advancement. Earning a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is one way for employees to stand out from the crowd when applying for a new job or promotion.

Candidates for a CDA must be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma or G.E.D., have 480 hours of experience working with children in the past five years, and have 120 clock hours of formal child care education in the past five years. If candidates meet the criteria, they can apply for a complete assessment.

Visit the following Web site to learn more about the requirements and benefits of obtaining a CDA:

<http://www.cdacouncil.org/cda.htm>

essential to being promoted on the job. Cooperation includes doing unpleasant jobs at times and assisting others who may need help.

Teamwork

Teamwork is working with others to achieve a common goal. This may include working as a team to produce a quality product or to deliver a quality service. Team players respect the ideas, opinions, and rights of others, and they do their fair share of the work.

Leadership

Leadership is the ability to provide direction or guidance. It is a critical management skill for those who wish to own a business or work in a top management position. Leadership qualities include integrity, commitment to co-workers and customers, and the courage to confront risks and to speak up when necessary. Good leaders are able to prioritize tasks to accomplish a goal, and they coach or train others to help develop their job skills.

BASIC SKILLS

Good communication skills are important in many professions. Effective speakers organize ideas and speak clearly to communicate a message. They use words and other cues (e.g., body language) that are appropriate for the audience. For example, a preschool teacher would use simple words and short sentences when speaking to a class of two-year-old children, but he or she would use proper terminology for a child's development stages when speaking to parents at a conference. Communication skills also include listening. Effective listeners are able to receive the speaker's message and interpret the verbal and nonverbal cues. Writing skills are included, too. Effective writers convey thoughts, ideas, and information in writing; they also edit their work for correct information, grammar, and punctuation.

Math

Basic math skills are necessary in many jobs. Even if a child care worker is not teaching math to students, he or she should be able to perform basic computations, such as adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. It also may be necessary for the employee to correctly use percentages, tables, and graphs at times.



FIGURE 2. Basic math skills are required for most careers in the human growth and development field.

THINKING SKILLS

There are various types of thinking skills that employers may look for in their employees. Creative thinkers are able to use their imaginations and combine ideas or information in different ways. They may find new ways to do something or change goals to reveal new possibilities. Decision makers are able to specify goals and alternatives. They consider the risks and benefits of each alternative, and then they choose the best option. Problem solvers recognize that a problem exists and identify possible reasons for it. They create a plan to solve the problem and monitor the plan, making changes as needed.

MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Many upper-level jobs require some level of management skills. Self-management is the ability to assess your own knowledge and skills correctly and to set well-defined and realistic personal goals. It also includes self-motivation to work toward goals and the ability to accept and respond to feedback in a way that is not defensive.

Leadership is another management skill that involves encouraging or motivating other workers in addition to challenging existing policies or procedures that could be improved. Leaders are able to manage time effectively while prioritizing activities and working toward goals. Managers also may be responsible for teaching others, identifying training needs, assessing employees, and providing constructive feedback.

Factors for Career Advancement

Career analysis is the process of examining the components of a job in a specific field of work. A career ladder is the opportunity for advancement at work by earning a promotion. To climb the career ladder at a company is to move to increasingly more senior and responsible jobs.

JOB DUTIES

When analyzing a career, an individual should consider the **job duties**—the tasks and responsibilities of daily work. For instance, child care workers care for a child’s physical needs and give the child a chance to learn and develop. A career in family counseling would include talking with married couples or parents and children, working in a clinic or an office, and working evening and weekend hours. An adult day care activity director organizes events, displays, guest speakers, dance and artistic opportunities, field trips, and classes of interest to the participants.

ENVIRONMENT

The **environment** is the employment working conditions. For example, an intensive care pediatric nurse relies on diagnostic monitors to track a child's vital signs and spends time holding and caring for a child. A toy store worker stocks shelves, handles purchases and returns, works overtime during the holiday season, and assists with gift selection at times.

APTITUDES AND EDUCATION

Individuals should consider their own aptitudes as well as the job's **education and training** (the required knowledge and skills to perform on the job). For instance, a child psychologist position requires a doctoral degree (PhD). A social worker requires a minimum of an undergraduate degree, and an entry-level child care worker position requires a high school diploma.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

Salary and benefits are the money and compensation (e.g., insurance coverage and sick days) earned for the work performed.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Employment outlook is the projected future demand for employees in a particular field. To learn more about the outlook, an individual may **research** (collect information about the career). One way to do this is through an **informational interview** in which the individual may question a worker to learn more about his or her job. Other research sources include books, magazines, and Web sites. The individual should collect information from all the sources and compare the findings to his or her personal interests when determining if a career is the right choice.

Summary:



To achieve success in a human growth and development profession, an individual needs to set short-term and long-term goals. These goals may include education, training, and promotions. People should consider their own aptitudes and skills.

Employers should consider an individual's personal attributes, interpersonal skills, leadership abilities, and communication and math skills. Employees can use career analysis to examine the components of a job and the opportunities for advancement.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What are aptitudes?
2. How can employees demonstrate initiative?
3. What is career analysis?
4. What are the terms for money and compensation earned for work performed?
5. What is an employment outlook?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Contact a community college in your area and research the available classes in child care. Contact someone in the department to ask about job placement resources. Does someone at the college help potential employers and employees find one another? Ask about what continuing education opportunities are available for professionals interested in climbing the career ladder.

Web Links:



Child Care Workers

<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos170.htm>

National Child Care Association

<http://www.nccanet.org/>

Nursing Care of Older Adults

<http://www.nursingcenter.com/library/static.asp?pageid=730388>