IPDP Tips and Tricks

What is an IPDP?

An Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) is written by you to guide your continuing professional growth. It is an action plan that describes an ongoing process. It has four parts:

- **SELF ASSESSMENT** – What are my current interests, knowledge, and skills? What do I want to learn more about or what skills do I want to develop?
- **GOALS** – What specific, measurable activity will I do?
- **STRATEGIES** – How will I do this, and what resources will I need to make it happen?
- **TIMELINE** – When will I meet each of my goals?

Activity 1: What do you do in a day?

Take 5 minutes – either by yourself, or in a group - and think about what you do in your program every day. Think broadly from arrival to activities to snacks to cleaning to parent pick-up time, no wrong answers – everything you do counts!

Connecting to the Unified Core Knowledge Areas (CKA)

When writing your IPDP, you need to connect your goals to one of the following "Unified Core Knowledge Areas":

1. CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING: Promoting Child Development and Learning
2. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: Building Relationships
3. DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICES
4. CURRICULUM AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: Using Developmentally Effective Practices and Building Meaningful Curriculum
5. OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT: Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Children and Families
6. PROFESSIONALISM AND ETHICAL PRACTICE: Growing as a Professional

Activity 2: Organizing Your "What I Do"

Take 5 minutes to organize your "what you do" list from Activity 1 into Core Knowledge Areas (CKA). Some activities may overlap. Pick whichever CKA seems most relevant. Do the best you can and help each other out if you're working on this together!

Self-Assessment

Step 1: Skills

Now that we've thought about what we do and how those activities fit into CKAs, let's think about what you do well. Don't be modest, you know what you're good at! Take a moment to write down three things that you are good at in your job.

Step 2: Learning

Now, take a minute to write down three times that you put your learning into practice this past year, and three things that you want to learn more about.

Step 3: Challenges

Lastly, take a minute to write down three challenges or areas for improvement.

Take a look back at your self-assessment, and think about three priorities you might have for your professional development in the coming year. Once you have an idea, it's time to make some S.M.A.R.T. Goals!

Goals

IPDPs should have at least 3 goals that are attainable within 1 year. You don't need more than 3, but you're certainly welcome to have more if you'd like

- **S**pecific - I know what to do
- **M**easurable - I will know when I am successful and the goal is met
- **A**chievable - I have the skills, tools and authority to do this
- **R**elevant - I care about this goal and it relates directly to my work with children and families
- **T**imely - The goal is broken down enough so I can achieve it within a year or less

IPDPs should have at least 3 goals that are attainable within 1 year. You don't need more than 3, but you're certainly welcome to have more if you'd like. You'll notice all 3 of these goals start with "I will research"… you don't necessarily need to 'research' but I think it is helpful to start your goal with "I will" and follow it with an action verb… you might use "identify"…. Or "find"…. Or "create"… or "develop"

Examples of S.M.A.R.T. Goals:

If your interest is…	*Then a GOAL could be…*
I want to incorporate a garden and cooking with local foods into my program.	I will research and construct a small garden with the children, staff, and families
I want to understand how to best teach the child in my program who is learning English as a second language	I will research, identify, and use 5 strategies to support communication of young dual-language learners
I want to add some more physical activities in the winter	I will research and use 10 additional physical activities based on the gross motor development of the children

Strategies and Resources

Once you've determined your goals, take a moment to consider the Strategies and Resources that you will need to achieve it.

Strategies: HOW you will you meet your goal?

Reading or researching?

Watching or Practicing?

Talking with others?

Resources: WHAT do you need to meet your goal?

Specific materials or resources?

Training or coursework?

Who could be a resource?

Timeline

Lastly, you'll need to think of a timeline for each of your goals. Remember – an IPDP should contain at least three goals that are *achievable within a year*. For each of your goals, identify the month and year you hope to meet your goal (ex: December 2026).

If you have a goal that is ongoing, or which will take more than a year to fully complete, try to think about how you can break it into smaller parts – e.g. your long-term goal may be to complete your Associate Degree, and a goal for the year could "I will complete two college-level courses related to Early Childhood Education", with a timeline of June 2026.

Example Goals

Sample Goal: I will create a support plan to address child biting in my classroom

Core Knowledge Area: Developmentally Appropriate and Inclusive Practices

Steps I plan to take or activities that will help me achieve this goal:

1. I will read 2 articles from reputable sources
2. I will take trainings related to child biting
3. I will work with my co-teacher to create a developmentally appropriate plan to address child biting in my classroom

Support or Resources I need from others to help me achieve this goal:

I will meet with my supervisor throughout this process to make sure our plan aligns with the values and policies at our school. I will ask my Northern Lights Resource Advisor for suggestions for articles I might read and trainings I might attend to help me meet this goal.

Timeline (when I expect this goal will be complete): December, 2026

Sample Goal: I will successfully complete a Child Development college course

Core Knowledge Area: Child Development and Learning

Steps I plan to take or activities that will help me achieve this goal:

1. I will register to take the class
2. I will keep up with my coursework through the semester
3. I will work with my college advisor if I need support

Support or Resources I need from others to help me achieve this goal:

I will ask my supervisor if I can complete my observations for this class in my preschool classroom. I can visit the learning center at CCV if I have trouble with any of the technology for this class.

Timeline (when I expect this goal will be complete): December, 2026

Entering your IPDP

There are two ways to have your IPDP entered into your BFIS account:

BFIS Entry

To enter your IPDP into BFIS, you can log in to your Quality and Credentialing account. Then, you can add or update your Professional Development Plan (IPDP) by clicking on the "Resume" tab. To add new IPDP click the "Record Professional Development Plan" link on the bottom of the page, to update an existing plan click on the "View Plan" link.

If entering directly into BFIS, it is strongly recommended that you write your plan in a word processor (like Word, Google Docs, or a notes app), and then copy and paste your responses into the appropriate fields in BFIS.

Direct Send

You can also complete your IPDP and send it to Northern Lights via Direct Send – pick one of the IPDP templates on the IPDP page of our website, fill it out, and take the following steps to send it via Direct Send:

1. Sign in to the Northern Lights User Portal
2. From the home page, click "Direct Send"
3. For the material, select "IPDP (Individual Professional Development Plan)"
4. Attach your IPDP
5. Click "Submit"

If you have any questions, you can always reach out to your Resource Advisor for assistance!