



Kentucky Family Development Credential Project

PORTFOLIO ADVISOR INSTRUCTIONS

Through the process of portfolio development, a portfolio advisor helps workers experience the personal benefits of a strengths-based family development relationship. Advisors model the partnership and trust that comes from respectful interactions with others. The cornerstone of a family development relationship, whether between workers and families, or portfolio advisors and workers, is mutual respect and trust.

CREATING A FAMILY DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

The FDC portfolio documents workers' knowledge and skills using family development in their workplaces and lives. A portfolio advisor helps workers recognize their strengths and develop skills and confidence.

Activities to Extend Learning

To begin the portfolio, workers identify three questions to answer from the *Activities to Extend Learning* section at the end of each chapter. Workers may choose any three questions from that section of the assigned chapter. Responses to *Activities to Extend Learning* questions help demonstrate a worker's knowledge and understanding of key concepts presented in the chapter. The responses are intended to help clarify workers' thinking as they begin to practice family development concepts. The portfolio advisor will read these responses and discuss them with the worker when they meet together. The portfolio advisor may provide written feedback on the *Activities to Extend Learning* responses, but this is not required.

Skills Practice

Workers also develop a plan to practice a skill from each chapter based on choices listed in the *Skills Practice* section. Most adults learn best when they can apply knowledge and skills in practical ways. The *Skills Practice* helps workers make a learning personally meaningful, relevant, and connected to their lives. For some workers, skills practices offer the opportunity to "stretch" their existing skills and competencies by challenging themselves to practice skills at more advanced levels. The portfolio advisor serves as a coach and partner to the worker who is developing new or enhanced skills. The portfolio advisor will also help workers reflect on their skills practice experiences in a partnership free from criticism and judgment, but where the worker can examine their experiences openly and honestly.

As a portfolio advisor, you will meet with the worker to review their Skills Practice Plan and provide feedback based on the following criteria:

1. The Skills Practice Plan clearly identifies how a worker will practice a skill presented in that chapter.
2. The Skills Practice Plan is a "stretch" for the worker without being too difficult.
3. The Skills Practice Plan provides an opportunity for the worker to explore new ideas and practice new skills.

A portfolio advisement discussion can help workers clarify the goal of the skills practice, and provide an opportunity for the advisor and worker to help simplify or streamline the steps in the skills practice.

Reflections on Skills Practices

While practicing a skill is the primary task of skill practices in a Family Development portfolio, a worker's reflection on the experience is equally important. For each skills practice, workers are asked to reflect on these questions:

- What strengths did I see in myself and the family?

- What worked?
- Could I improve on this skill in the future?

After each skills practice, workers complete a Skills Practice Reflection form and provide the following information:

- A description of the skills they practiced and what they did.
- A description of what went well.
- What they might do differently next time.

ROLE OF THE FDC PORTFOLIO ADVISOR

Through the following adaptation of the seven steps of family development, portfolio advisors will assist workers to develop and practice using a family development approach:

- Portfolio advisors develop a partnership with workers.
- Portfolio advisors help workers assess their needs and strengths – this is an ongoing process.
- Workers set their own major goal (such as earning the FDC Credential). They also establish their own smaller goals working toward the major goal, and identify ideas for reaching them.
- Portfolio advisors help workers make a written plan for pursuing these goals, with some tasks being the responsibility of the workers and some the portfolio advisors. Accomplishments are celebrated and the plan is continually updated.
- Workers learn and practice skills needed to become self-reliant – this is an ongoing process.
- Workers use support from portfolio advisors as a stepping stone to reach their goal.
- Workers' sense of responsibility and self-reliance is enhanced. The worker is strengthened through the portfolio development process.

The FDC portfolio documents workers' knowledge and skills using family development in their workplaces and lives. As the portfolio advisor, you help workers recognize their strengths, and develop skills and confidence. The advisor provides feedback, and offers guidance for workers as they develop the FDC portfolio.

GUIDELINE FOR WORKER-PORTFOLIO ADVISOR RELATIONSHIP

- The relationship between the worker and portfolio advisor is a key component in the success workers experience in the FDC process.
- It takes time for a partnership between advisor and worker to grow.
- Mutual respect is a critical factor to developing trust.
- Effective communication includes both the worker and portfolio advisor stating their needs clearly and respectfully.
- Skills practices are considered “practice” and the experience can be as important as the end result.
- Focus feedback on what the worker did well and lessons learned in the process.
- The worker-advisor relationship should model the principles and practice of family development that workers are learning to use with families.
- An advisor's role is to support workers in the portfolio development process. Setting a schedule of mutually agreeable times to meet will work best for both parties!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

How often should the advisor and worker meet?

On average, about an hour for each of the ten chapters.

Does the portfolio need to be typed?

It does not. The portfolio advisor's role is to support the choice a worker makes in portfolio development. If a portfolio is handwritten, the penmanship must be legible.

What about grammar and spelling?

The portfolio is not assessed based on grammar and spelling. In the spirit of mutual respect, advisors should not correct grammar or spelling unless the worker requests it.

How long should the written activities be?

Portfolios are not judged on the length of response. Some workers will write very brief answers and others will discuss the question in greater length. We suggest that each answer not exceed one page, however some workers will write much shorter answers.

If a worker doesn't keep up with assignments, what should the portfolio advisor do?

As soon as the portfolio advisor becomes aware of a potential problem, the portfolio advisor should talk with the worker. Using respectful communication skills and focusing on working together as partners, the portfolio advisor should help the worker assess whether the difficulty in meeting the portfolio assignment deadlines is temporary or requires developing a plan to improve. Offer to help develop a Family Development Plan with a suggested goal to catch up on portfolio assignments. In meeting to review the progress of the plan, focus on the worker's strengths and accomplishments, and provide support and encouragement.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ACTIVITIES TO EXTEND LEARNING

How do I know what question a worker is answering?

Workers should provide the letter and number of the Activity to Extend Learning questions so the portfolio advisor knows what question they have answered.

How can I tell if a worker is "stretching" when writing a response?

A worker may choose any three Activity to Extend Learning questions from the chapter. The portfolio advisor's responsibility is to ensure that all parts of the question are answered. As a mutually respectful relationship and trust develops, the portfolio advisor may be able to discuss whether the worker is comfortable taking a "stretch" in Activity to Extend Learning responses or skills practices. The portfolio advisor's interest, support and strengths-based feedback will help workers do their best portfolio work.

What if the worker doesn't answer all parts of an Activity to Extend Learning question?

Discuss the missing part with the worker, ask that it be completed and agree on a date for completion. Remember to share strengths-based feedback on the parts of the assignment that were submitted.

What are situations when a worker might need to rewrite an Activity to Extend Learning response?

If an answer is incomplete, illegible or does not respond to the question, the portfolio advisor may suggest that the worker rewrite the response. Grammar, spelling and length of response are all individual matters which are not reasons for rewriting.

Should the portfolio advisor include written feedback on an Activity to Extend Learning response?

Many portfolio advisors write comments about a worker's strengths on Activities to Extend Learning responses and workers enjoy receiving them. Experienced portfolio advisors recommend using post-it notes or a separate sheet of paper for comments rather than writing directly on the portfolio. Written comments to workers, reflecting their strengths, can be even more powerful and rewarding than verbal remarks. However, it is important to remember that the portfolio is the worker's personal document – do not insert written comments or feedback on the portfolio itself.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SKILLS PRACTICES

What is the difference between a skills practice and an activity to extend learning?

A skills practice is something the worker does. An activity to extend learning may be something the worker does but it is often similar to most of the learning the worker did in school where the worker is answering questions based on what was read or learned in class.

Can workers write about something they did with a family in the past?

The purpose of the skills practice is to try a skill while working with the portfolio advisor so the worker can experience making a plan and following it through. Workers are encouraged to try new experiences.

How do I know whether the skill is a new one or something the worker has tried before?

It's okay for workers to try a skill they have tried before. We learn from all of our experiences and doing something differently can be a great learning experience.

What if the worker doesn't provide much detail when describing the skill they practiced?

As long as the portfolio advisor has enough information to know what skill the worker experienced, the portfolio advisor is likely to understand what is describe in the worker's reflection. Remember the written information is just the starting point for a conversation between the portfolio advisor and worker. More can be learned and the worker can clarify their experience in that conversation with the portfolio advisor.

What if the planned skill practice is no longer possible and the worker needs to make a new plan?

Because skills practices are frequently planned with others, it isn't unusual for circumstances to change that prevent the worker from following through with the plan. Discuss some guidelines to use if that this situation should arise, and decide how to communicate through email or by telephone to formulate an alternative plan.

Do I need to observe the skills practice?

Instructors and portfolio advisors are not required to observe workers practicing skills. Some college programs may involve observation as part of their requirement for college credit.