

## National Workforce Registry Alliance and Partners Explore Digital Badging for the Early Childhood Workforce

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Washington, DC (MARCH 7, 2016): The National Workforce Registry Alliance (Alliance), together with the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Council for Professional Recognition, and a work group of expert advisors and with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, are exploring the role of digital badging to support the early childhood field and contribute to career development.

The importance of the early years is widely understood, and how to recruit, retain and support the best and most qualified caregivers and teachers is of critical importance.

Initial qualifications and ongoing requirements for training and professional development vary by state, by type of setting, funding stream, regulatory agency, and employer in the early education field. The quality, availability and content of professional development also varies widely. Some states are taking action to integrate professional development or workforce systems, and federal policy opportunities are driving this, too. Unfortunately, the advances in expectations and investments in early childhood education still occur in the context of a fragmented workforce earning poverty wages with high turnover.

The Alliance seeks to promote a framework that improves training, education, and ultimately the competency of early childhood and after-school professionals.

Today the Alliance and partners released a new series of papers:

- Paper 1: Bridging Gaps to Advance the Early Childhood Workforce Today and the Future
- Paper 2: Exploring the Possibilities of Badges for the Early Childhood Workforce: *CCDBG – a practical case study example*
- Paper 3: Badging: Considerations and Potential Ahead for the Early Childhood Workforce

Digital badging has the potential to bridge some of the gaps and provide recognition of training and skill acquisition that is otherwise not recognized. Badging could serve as a method to link professional development plans and activities to a larger policy framework, and also to the practitioner's career goals.

"NAEYC has been an enthusiastic participant in these conversations about the potential of digital badging," added Rhian Allvin, Executive Director, NAEYC. "For early childhood educators seeking opportunities to strengthen their practice, badges could provide access to a cohesive set of high-quality, stackable and portable professional development offerings."

"Every question in this exploration brought up more questions and ideas. We identified principles for making badging meaningful for the early childhood workforce as a framework for our decision-making and idea-sharing," noted Valora Washington, Chief Executive Officer of the Council for Professional Recognition. "Badges would have to have currency. They couldn't just be 'for show' and they would need to be issued by a valid, quality source in order to convey achievement in quality training and competency in the work. This led to more questions and more ideas."

The partners considered the very real scenarios of the early childhood workforce: the teacher with more than 30 years' experience, certified in her state, who moves to a new state and is challenged to get hired because the rules are different there; teachers with formal education in something other than early childhood, and the need to bolster the developmentally appropriate practice; and caregivers and teachers achieving hours and hours of training each year without the numbers adding up to advancing her career. Someone who attended training for state-funded preK or Head Start or child care might find themselves employed in another setting in the future. There is value in the transfer, application of knowledge, and ability to verify the achievements along the career path.

"I'm excited about the potential that digital badging offers to recognize the knowledge and skills that our early childhood and afterschool workforce have acquired. And it holds promise for addressing the issues of reciprocity between states," said Phyllis Kalifeh, President of Florida Children's Forum and Board President of the National Workforce Registry Alliance.

Visit <http://registryalliance.org> to explore the potential for digital badging for the early childhood workforce in the new series of papers and to join the conversation.

The Alliance thanks the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Council for Professional Recognition for their partnership, and the expert work group members who added so much value to these discussions: Child Care Aware of America, National Afterschool Association, National Association for Family Child Care, National Head Start Association, National Association for Regulatory Administration, and ZERO TO THREE.

*The National Registry Workforce Alliance is a private, non-profit, voluntary organization of state early childhood and afterschool workforce registry and professional development leaders. Our Mission is to enhance, strengthen, and support the work of state early childhood and afterschool registries by providing an interactive forum for networking and information and strategy exchanges. Our vision is to prompt high quality, coordinated, documented, and accessible state career development systems that support a well-trained, well-educated, supported, adequately compensated early childhood and afterschool workforce. Across the country members of the Alliance work day-to-day with professionals in the field of child care who receive mixed messages regarding professional standards of education and training and must navigate many different type of organizations in the public, non-profit and private sphere to attain various levels of specific competencies. For more information, please visit <http://registryalliance.org>.*