

Glossary on Early Learning in Indiana



Developed by the Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC)

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Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC)
Glossary on Early Learning Definitions

Accreditation: A voluntary system which evaluates child care and early childhood education programs against specific criteria in areas of curriculum, health and safety, parent communication, and staff qualifications which has been validated by a nationally recognized early childhood organization or institution.

Administration for Children and Families (ACF): An agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) which is responsible for federal programs that promotes the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities.

Assessment: The process of observation and recording initiated by teachers or an external evaluator to provide information about children's development (social, emotional, cognitive, fine and gross motor abilities, speech and language), and identify children's specific strengths and needs. In early childhood, assessment serves different purposes: to plan instruction; to communicate with parents; to identify children who may be in need of specialized services or intervention; and to evaluate how well the instruction and curriculum are meeting goals.

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI): ACSI is one of the nationally recognized accrediting bodies, specifically for faith-based early childhood education programs, approved by Indiana's Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL).

Authentic Assessment: The process of gathering evidence and documentation of a child's learning and growth in ways that resemble real life as closely as possible (e.g., observing and documenting a child's work in the environment and routines, e.g., as the child plays in the block area or is eating a meal). To measure growth and progress, a child's work is compared to his/her previous work rather than to the work of others. Authentic assessment is based on what the child actually does in a variety of contexts at points throughout the school year, and represents the child's application, not mere acquisition, of knowledge and skills.

Caregiver: A person who provides direct care for children in an early learning setting, such as a home, early learning program or other environment; and can include formal caregivers such as teachers, or other adults such as parents or relatives.

Child Care: See Early Childhood Education Program.

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF): A program authorized through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and administered in Indiana through the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL) for the purpose of having one single integrated child care

funding system that assists low-income families through subsidized child care and increases the availability of quality child care services. It combines several child care programs: TANF/child care; Transitional Child Care; At-Risk/Title IV-A of the Social Security Act. CCDF serves infants/toddlers (0-3), preschoolers (3-4), and kindergarteners/school-aged children (up to 13 years old).

Child Care Professional: See Early Childhood Education Professional.

Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) Agencies: Agencies that help families find the child care they need; educates families and the community about child care choices and quality; and supports child care providers' improvement in quality through training, technical assistance, and other support services.

Child Care Voucher: A document which states the authorized subsidy for child care services for a specific eligible child, eligible provider, begin date, end date, and dollar amount. The voucher is provided by the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).

Child Care Waiting List: A list of children who preliminarily meet eligibility criteria for the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program, but for whom there are no available funds (or "slots"). The Head Start programs also maintain waitlists.

Child Development Associate (CDA): A national competency-based certification credential for individual child care providers that is awarded through the National Council for Professional Recognition. The credentialing program focuses on the skills of early care and education professionals and is designed to provide performance-based training and assessment of infant/toddler teachers, preschool teachers, home visitors, and family child care providers.

Children with Disabilities: Children who require special education and related services for conditions that may include: intellectual disability; hearing impairments; speech or language impairments; visual impairments; serious emotional disturbances; orthopedic impairments; autism; traumatic brain injury; or specific learning disabilities.

Cognitive Development: Domain refers to the process of growth and change in children's intellectual/mental abilities such as thinking, learning, reasoning and understanding.

Council on Accreditation (COA): is an international, independent, nonprofit, human service accrediting organization. COA accredits the full continuum of child welfare, behavioral health, and community-based social services. COA's Child and Youth Development (CYD) Program Accreditation is the accreditation of services for early childhood education, after school, and youth development programs. COA is one of the nationally recognized accrediting bodies approved by Indiana's Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL).

Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKCs): Refers to the expectations for what the early childhood education workforce should know (content) and be able to do (skills) in their role working with and/or on behalf of children and their families:

Curriculum: A written plan that includes goals for children's development and learning, the experiences through which they will achieve the goals, what staff and parents should do to help children achieve the goals, and the materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum.

Developmental Stages: Natural or common divisions of the process of human growth characterized by types of behavior, biological properties or manifestations, and mental processes.

Developmentally Appropriate: Any behavior or experience that is matched to the maturity of the individual child with respect to age, needs, interests, developmental levels, and cultural background.

Director: This individual is the person responsible for the day-to-day program implementation and is present at the Early Childhood Education Program to oversee and/or participate in the program.

Domain – A category of learning and development in which goals and strategies are grouped. There are five domains of early childhood development: motor, language, cognitive, social/emotional, and self-help/adaptive. Each of these domains are also interrelated.

Early Care and Education: Referring to educational programs and strategies geared toward children from birth to age eight (8). This time period is widely considered the most vulnerable and crucial stage of a person's life and focuses on guiding children through play.

Early Childhood: Birth to eight (8) years of age.

Early Childhood Education Professional: A title used to describe a qualified person who works with young children birth to eight (8) years of age, often used interchangeably with early childhood professional, early childhood teacher, early childhood educator, early childhood practitioner, early childhood provider, child care professional, or child care provider.

Early Childhood Development: The process by which children from birth to age eight gradually gain the skills and confidence needed to succeed in their present environment and the cognitive skills needed to form a foundation for school readiness and later school success.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) : Activities and experiences that are intended to effect developmental changes in children from birth through the primary units of elementary school (grades K-3).

Early Childhood Education (ECE) Professional Development: A continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare professionals for work with, and on behalf, of young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. These opportunities lead to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of early education professionals. Professional development encompasses education, training, and technical assistance.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program: Provision of safe environments, nurturing care, and appropriate developmental learning experiences for children—usually while their parents or caregiver(s) work or attend school. (Types: Licensed Child Care Centers, Family Child Care, Licensed Child Care Home, Private Preschool Program, Public Preschool Program, Unlicensed Registered Child Care Ministry, and Voluntary Certification Registered Ministry)

Early Childhood Educator: See Early Childhood Education Professional.

Early Childhood Education Workforce: See Early Childhood Education Professional.

Early Education Matching Grant (EEMG): A program created by the Indiana General Assembly during the 2013 legislative session that was designed to increase the enrollment of low-income four-year olds in high quality preschool programs. The legislation provides for \$2 million a year over two years, beginning in 2014.

Early Head Start (EHS): A federally funded program that provides low-income pregnant women and families with children birth to three years of age with family-centered services that facilitate child development, support parental roles, and promote self-sufficiency.

Early Intervention: Efforts to support children at risk for, or in the early stages of, an identified disability and/or developmental delay; usually targeted at early childhood, sometimes including prenatal care.

Elementary Education: Enrollment in primary school (typically kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade), excluding those students being home schooled or participating in distance learning.

Evidence-Based Practice: An informed decision-making process that integrates the best available research evidence and professional expertise. (For example, the decision to use a certain method of teaching because evidence has repeatedly shown that the method has demonstrated positive results.)

Experiential Learning: Acquisition of knowledge and skills through work, play, and other life experiences outside of the traditional classroom environment; learning by doing.

Family: A basic social unit typically consisting of one or more adults together with the children they care for. The definition of “family” varies across cultures and according to social norms.

Family Child Care: An early childhood education program option in which services to children are delivered in the homes of permitted or licensed family child care providers licensed by the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL).

Family Engagement Framework: A framework that was developed and approved by the Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) for the state of Indiana in the fall of 2014.

Parent and Family Engagement is defined as:

- Families actively supporting their children’s learning and development, and sharing the responsibility with early care and education providers who are committed to engaging with families in meaningful, culturally respectful ways
- Continuous across a child’s life, beginning in infancy and extending through college and career preparation programs.
- Occurring across the various early care and learning settings where children play and grow.

Family Literacy Services: Services that are of sufficient intensity and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and that integrate all of the following activities: Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children; training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency and financial literacy; and an age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

Family Partnership Agreements: This agreement offers opportunities for parents to expand their knowledge about community services and resources, and develop networks and relationships with families, service providers, community agencies, and school systems.

Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA): FSSA is a health care and social service funding agency established by the Indiana General Assembly in 1991 to consolidate and better integrate the delivery of human services by State government.

Federal Poverty Guidelines: Guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)) that consider the number in the family unit and income level to determine whether a person or family is financially eligible for assistance or services under a particular Federal program. These guidelines are based on poverty thresholds used by the Bureau of Census to prepare its statistical estimates of the number of persons/families in poverty. The poverty guidelines are adjusted each year to account for the last calendar year’s increase in prices as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

First Steps Early Intervention: A program authorized by Part C of IDEA and administered by FSSA that serves infants and toddlers—birth to three (3) years of age—who demonstrate a delay in development, or have a diagnosed condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay, and would benefit from additional supports to address their needs in order to enhance the child’s development and the family’s capacity to care and advocate for their child.

Formal Care: Program-based care, that is licensed, registered, certified, or otherwise recognized by the state of Indiana. (For examples of formal care, see Licensed Care or Unlicensed Registered Child Care Ministry)

FOUNDATIONS to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5: The FOUNDATIONS are Indiana’s Early Learning and Development guidelines for children ages birth to five. They cover all domains of a child’s development.

Full-day/Full-year Programs: Programs in which a child is enrolled for a substantial part of each day for a period of 12 months.

Grantee: A local corporation or other legal entity, either public or private, to which a grant is awarded.

Head Start: A federally funded program that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children, birth to 5 years of age, and their families. Head Start programs must adhere to a federally defined set of minimum criteria for each component in the program called the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*.

Head Start State Collaboration Offices: States receive Head Start State Collaboration Grants to support the development of multi-agency and public/private partnerships at the state level to benefit low-income children from birth to five (5) years of age and their families, as well as pregnant women.

High-Quality Preschool Program: An early learning program that includes structural elements that are evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality. In Indiana, High-Quality Preschool is defined as a program that is Level 3 or Level 4 in Paths to QUALITY™ or nationally accredited by a state approved accrediting body.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) : The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the nation’s federal special education law that provides services to students with identified special needs. Part B of the law serves children ages 3-21 through their local public school; Part C serves younger children birth to 3 years of age who are experiencing developmental delays and/or have a diagnosed condition. In Indiana, these services are provided through a local network of service providers that are part of the First Steps system.

Informal Assessment: A non-standardized measurement by which an adult gauges what a child is able to do in various content areas. Informal assessment helps the adult tailor instruction and curriculum to meet each child's needs and interests.

Indiana Association for Child Care Resource and Referral (IACCRR): An Indiana non-profit organization whose mission is to work with member Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies to provide, coordinate, and advocate for a strong statewide system of child care resource and referral.

Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (IAEYC): The state affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) whose mission is to support quality care and education for all young children birth through eight (8) years of age in Indiana.

Indiana Department of Education (IDOE): IDOE is an educational agency established by the Indiana General Assembly to oversee the educational instruction of children in Indiana.

Indiana Education Roundtable: Indiana's Education Roundtable serves to improve educational opportunity and achievement for all Hoosier students, specifically focusing on K-12 education. It is composed of key leaders from education, business, community, and government.

Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE): Established by the Indiana General Assembly, the State Board of Education oversees state K-12 education policymaking. The bipartisan board is composed of eleven members, including the Superintendent of Public Instruction who is the chairperson.

Individual Education Plan (IEP): An annually revised plan for an exceptional student, detailing present achievement level, goals, and strategies. It is drawn up by teachers, parents, specialists, and when appropriate, the student. It serves as a plan for students receiving services under Part B or Part C of IDEA.

Infant: Early childhood education for children, birth to 12 months of age.

Informal Care: Care provided by a relative, friend, or neighbor who is not registered with the state of Indiana.

Kindergarten: A program or class for four to six year old children that serves as an introduction to school.

Kindergarten Entry Assessment: An assessment that is administered to children during the first few months of kindergarten.

Kindergarten Readiness: A definition that was developed and approved by the Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) for the state of Indiana in the summer of 2014:

In Indiana, we work together so that every child can develop to his or her fullest potential—socially, emotionally, physically, cognitively, and academically. Through growth in all of these domains, the child will become a healthy, capable, competent, and powerful learner.

Language Development: The developmental domain by which children come to understand and communicate language by expressing thoughts and feeling.

Lead Caregiver: Licensed child care homes will each have a designated Lead Caregiver. A licensed child care home Lead Caregiver is the individual who is responsible for day-to-day program implementation and is present on site to oversee and/or participate in the child care program. A Lead Caregiver cannot service more than one site. In some circumstances, the Licensee may be a different person than the Lead Caregiver.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): As required by the IDEA, school districts must educate students with disabilities in the regular classroom with appropriate aids and supports, to the maximum extent appropriate, with their nondisabled peers in the school they would attend if not disabled, unless a student's IEP requires some other arrangement.

Level (1-4): Distribution of criteria used in the Paths to QUALITY™ framework identifying indicators of higher quality at higher levels.

Licensed Care: An early childhood education program that meets certain criteria set by the state of Indiana.

Licensed Child Care Centers: A licensed early childhood education program designed to provide care for one or more children in a commercial building. Licensed Child Care Centers must meet specific rules and regulations, including requirements for teacher training and education, staff to child ratios, nutrition, discipline, and the supervision of children. Child capacity in a licensed center is limited by the square footage and bathroom facilities in the facility.

Licensed Child Care Home: A licensed Early Childhood Education Program operated within a residence. Licensed Child Care homes must meet specific regulations, including requirements for teacher training and education, staff to child ratios, nutrition, discipline, and the supervision of children. Child capacity in a licensed child care home is limited to no more than 16 and depends on the ages of the children and the number of caregivers present.

Licensed Provider: See Licensed Care.

Licensed-Exempt Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Certified Centers: Child care that occurs in a commercial building in which the program meets one of the exemptions to licensure including programs that operate less than four hours a day, are registered as a ministry, operate 90 days or less per year (such as summer camps) or other exemptions under IC12-17.2-2. These programs are not licensed but have been certified to

receive public funds through the CCDF voucher program. These unlicensed facilities must meet minimum health and safety standards as defined by the Provider Eligibility Standards (IC12-17.2-3.5).

Licensed-Exempt Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Certified Homes: Child care that occurs in a residential building in which the provider cares for five or fewer unrelated children. The provider is not licensed, but has been certified to receive public funds through the CCDF voucher program. These unlicensed homes must meet minimum health and safety standards as defined by the Provider Eligibility Standards (IC12-17.2-3.5)

Local Education Agency (LEA): A commonly used synonym for a school district, an entity that operates local public schools.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): A document describing a bilateral or multilateral agreement between parties. It expresses a convergence of will between the parties, indicating an intended common line of action. It is often used in cases where parties either do not imply a legal commitment or in situations where the parties cannot create a legally enforceable agreement.

Mental Health Services: Assistance for mental and emotional disorders provided by licensed or certified mental health professionals with experience and expertise.

Motor Development: Physical developmental domain that involves “gross motor” and “fine motor” learning. Gross motor involves large movement of limbs, such as crawling, climbing, and walking. Fine motor involves the manipulative movement of fingers, such as writing, coloring, and cutting with scissors.

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC): NAFCC is one of the nationally recognized accrediting bodies, specifically for Family Child Care Homes, approved by Indiana’s Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL).

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): One of the nationally recognized accrediting bodies approved by Indiana’s Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL). It is also a membership association for individuals, professionals and organizations interested and involved in early childhood education.

National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA): One of the nationally recognized accrediting bodies approved by Indiana’s Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL).

Non-Traditional Care: Care provided beyond the traditional care of Monday through Friday, 6:00am to 6:00pm, such as evenings, weekends and sick child care.

Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL): A division within FSSA with the responsibility of licensing child care and implementing the Paths to QUALITY™.

Office of Head Start (OHS) Monitoring: The federal on-site monitoring process of Head Start grantees every three years, which is conducted by a team of external consultants

On My Way Pre-K: During the 2014 legislative session, the Indiana General Assembly enacted House Enrolled Act (“HEA”) 1004, to fund a Pre-Kindergarten pilot grant program. Grants are made available for families of low-income (127% FPL) four-year olds in 5 pilot counties (Allen, Jackson, Lake, Marion and Vanderburgh) to enroll in high quality preschool. The legislation provides \$10 million in state funding.

Paths to QUALITY™: A free, voluntary Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)) designed to raise the standard of quality in early childhood education in Indiana. Paths to QUALITY™ includes four levels of standards, with each level having progressively higher levels of standards.

Post-Secondary Education: Education provided by an institution beyond high school, which may include a credential, two-year, four year or professional degree.

Pre-Kindergarten (or Pre-K): Early childhood education for children four (4) years of age, or for the year immediately prior to their enrollment in Kindergarten.

Preschool: Early childhood education for children three (3) to four (4) years of age.

Private Preschool Programs: Early Childhood Education programs located in a non-public school building that typically offer educational enrichment and social interactions for children two (2) to five (5) years of age. These programs usually operate on a part-day basis, two to five days per week, less than five hours per day and may not be required to be regulated or licensed.

Public Preschool Program: Early Childhood Education programs located in a public school building that typically offer educational enrichment and social interactions for children two (2) to five (5) years of age. These programs may operate on a part-day basis, two to five days per week, less than five hours per day and may not be required to be regulated or licensed.

Request for Proposals (RFP): An official or formal solicitation by an agency or organization for proposals in a wide range of categories, such as grant funding, special projects, and training events.

School Readiness: See Kindergarten Readiness.

School-Age (Based on Type of Facility):

- a. Center and Unlicensed Registered Ministry: A child attending first grade or above.
- b. Home: A child who is attending first grade or above.

School-Age Care: Care provided to school-age children (K-12th grade) before and after school.

Secondary Education: Enrollment in middle, junior or senior high school program, excluding those students being home schooled or participating in distance learning.

Self-Help / Adaptive Development: This domain refers to the skills used for daily living, such as dressing, eating, toileting and washing.

Social/Emotional Development: A young child's growing capacity to experience, express, and regulate emotions, engage in positive relationships with others, and as a result, learn and develop in the context of family, culture, and community.

Special Education Preschool: A program authorized by Part B of IDEA and administered by IDOE that serves eligible children three (3) to five (5) years of age, who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in a general education environment. Part B of IDEA serves children ages 3-21 through their local public school preschool.

Standardized Assessment: Measures that can be quantified with proven validity and reliability from which scores are interpreted against a set of norms, such as state, national, or international norms.

State Licensing Boards: Agencies that authorize the practice of a profession or operation of a business in a state after determining that established standards and requirements have been met.

State Preschool Program: A preschool program predominately supported with State funds that provides services to children three to four years of age.

Statewide Longitudinal Data System: A State's longitudinal education data system that collects and maintains detailed, high-quality, student- and staff-level data that are linked across state agencies and that over time provide a complete academic and performance history for each student from Pre-K through post-secondary education/career.

Teacher: See Early Childhood Education Professional.

Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood® Indiana): A program administered by Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (IAEYC) that offers educational scholarship opportunities for early childhood teachers, directors, and family child care providers who are working in legally exempt or regulated early childhood programs.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF): A federally funded program given to states to provide benefits and services to needy families with specific requirements. TANF was enacted in the Welfare Reform Act, Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PL 104-193) and is administered in Indiana by FSSA.

Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)): The system through which the State uses a set of progressively higher program standards to evaluate the quality of an early learning and development program and to support program improvement. Indiana’s TQRIS is Paths to QUALITY™.

Toddler: Early childhood education for children from twelve (12) months of age through thirty-six (36) months of age.

Unlicensed Registered Child Care Ministry: An Early Childhood Education Program operated by a faith-based organization exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Unlicensed Registered Ministries are required to meet basic fire, safety, and sanitation regulations but are not required to meet the same requirements as licensed providers. Unlicensed Registered Child Care ministries are not required to be licensed in Indiana.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): An agency within the federal government, of which the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is a part, that is responsible for federal programs dealing with health and general welfare.

Voluntary Certification Program (VCP): A voluntary, quality enhancement program administered by the Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL) with equivalent program standards as licensed providers for Unlicensed Registered Child Care Ministry.

Voluntary Certification Registered Ministry (VCP Ministry): When an Unlicensed Registered Child Care Ministry has voluntarily agreed to meet the program standards for the Voluntary Certification Program (VCP). A Voluntary Certified Registered Ministry is not required to be licensed

INDEX

A

Accreditation, 2, 10
ACF, 2, 13
ACSI, 2
Administration for Children and Families, 2, 13
AEYC, 12
Assessment, 2, 8, 12
Association of Christian Schools International, 2
Authentic Assessment, 2

C

CCDF, 2, 3, 9, 10
CCR&R, 8
CDA, 3
Child Care, 2
Child Care and Development Fund, 2, 3, 9, 10
Child Care Professional, 3
Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) Agencies, 3
Child Care Voucher, 3
Child Care Waiting List, 3
Children with Disabilities, 3
CKCs, 4
COA, 3
Cognitive Development, 3
Council on Accreditation, 3
Curriculum, 4

D

Department of Health and Human Services, 2, 13
Developmental Stages, 4
Developmentally Appropriate, 4
Director, 4
Domain, 3, 4, 12

E

Early Care and Education, 4
Early Childhood, 4
Early Childhood Education (ECE) Professional Development, 5
Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program, 5
Early Childhood Education Professional, 3, 5, 12
Early Childhood Education Program, 2, 4, 6, 9, 13
Early Childhood Education Workforce, 5
Early Childhood Educator, 5
Early Education Matching Grant, 5
Early Head Start, 5
Early Intervention, 5
EEMG, 5
ELAC, 2
Elementary Education, 5
Evidence-based Practice, 5
Experiential Learning, 5

F

Family, 6
Family and Social Services Administration, 2, 6
Family Child Care, 5, 6, 10
Family Child Care Homes, 10
Family Engagement, 6
Family Literacy Services, 6
Family Partnership Agreements, 6
Federal Poverty Level, 6
First Steps, 7
First Steps Early Intervention, 7
Formal Care, 7
FOUNDATIONS, 7
FSSA, 2, 6, 7, 10, 12
Full-day/Full-year Programs, 7

G

Grantee, 7

H

Head Start, 3, 7, 11
Head Start Program Performance Standards, 7
Head Start State Collaboration Offices, 7
HHS, 2, 6, 13
High-Quality Preschool Program, 7

I

IDEA, 7, 8, 9, 12
IDOE, 8, 12
IEP, 9
Indiana Association for Child Care Resource and Referral, 8
Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children, 8, 12
Indiana Department of Education, 8
Indiana Education Roundtable, 8
Indiana State Board of Education, 8
Individual Education Plan (IEP), 8
Infant, 8
Informal Assessment, 8
Informal Care, 8

K

Kindergarten, 5, 8
Kindergarten Entry Assessment, 8

L

Language Development, 9
Lead Caregiver, 9
Lease Restrictive Environment (LRE), 9

Level (1-4), 9
 Licensed Care, 7, 9
 Licensed Child Care Centers, 5, 9
 Licensed Child Care Home, 5, 9
 Licensed child care homes, 9
 Licensed Provider, 9
 Licensed-Exempt Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Certified Centers, 9
 Licensed-Exempt Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Certified Homes, 10
 Local Education Agency, 10

M

Memorandum of Understanding, 10
 Mental Health Services, 10
 Motor Development, 10

N

NAEYC, 8
 National Association for Family Child Care, 10
 National Association for the Education of Young Children, 8, 10
 National Early Childhood Program Accreditation, 10
 NECPAC, 10
 Non-Traditional Care, 10

O

OECOSL, 2, 3, 6, 10, 13
 Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning, 2, 3, 6, 10, 13
 Office of Head Start (OHS) Monitoring, 11
 On My Way PreK, 11

P

Part B or Part C of IDEA, 8
 Paths to QUALITY™, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13
 Post-Secondary Education, 11
 PreK, 11, 12
 Prekindergarten, 11
 Preschool, 7, 11, 12
 Private Preschool Program, 5

Private Preschool Programs, 11
 Public Preschool Program, 5, 11

R

Request for Proposals, 11
 RFP, 11

S

SBOE, 8
 School Readiness, 8, 11
 School-Age (Based on Type of Facility), 11
 School-Age Care, 12
 Secondary Education, 12
 Self-Help / Adaptive Development, 12
 Social/emotional Development, 12
 Special Education Preschool, 12
 Standardized Assessment, 12
 State Licensing Boards, 12
 State Preschool Program, 12
 Statewide Longitudinal Data System, 12

T

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood, 12
 TANF, 3, 12
 Teacher, 12
 Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, 12
 Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, 11, 13
 Toddler, 13
 TQRIS, 11, 13

U

Unlicensed Registered Child Care Ministry, 5, 7, 13

V

VCP Ministry, 13
 Voluntary Certification Program, 13
 Voluntary Certification Registered Ministry, 5, 13