

Getting Started: A Guide for Parenting Educators

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PARENTING EDUCATOR?

Parenting educators come from a wide range of backgrounds and may represent diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, have various levels of formal and informal education, as well as different passions and lived experiences.

Parenting educators share the beliefs that:

- Parents/caregivers are their children’s first and most important teachers.
- Parenting education has the potential to enhance the knowledge, skills, strategies, and social support that parents/caregivers have to be the parents they want to be in their journey of caring for children.
- A strengths-based approach is most effective, meeting families where they are and recognizing every family’s strengths and value.

Parenting educators support families by providing group-based classes and/or home visits with the use of evidence-based and culturally-responsive curricula. This resource was created specifically for parenting educators delivering parenting education classes and workshops in group settings.



WHAT IS THE OREGON PARENTING EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE (OPEC)?

The Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative (OPEC) is a statewide network that currently includes 16 parenting education Hubs serving 35 Oregon counties and Siskiyou County, California. OPEC is a partnership between The Oregon Community Foundation, The Ford Family Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, the Collins Foundation, and Oregon State University.

Each Hub aims to provide their region with free or low-cost parenting classes, workshops, and resources for parents and families. To learn more about OPEC, visit www.orparenting.org



WHAT IS THE OREGON PARENTING EDUCATION NETWORK (OrPEN)?

The Oregon Parenting Education Network (OrPEN) is a network created by parenting educators for parenting educators. To learn more about OrPEN, visit <https://orparenting.org/parent-educators/joinorpen/>

OrPEN is a professional support network that:

- Fosters public awareness of the importance of parenting education
- Promotes a framework for high-quality professional development
- Informs public policy and advocacy
- Supports professional recognition
- Encourages engagement in collaboration and learning



10 STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED AS A PARENTING EDUCATOR

Step 1: Connect with your local OPEC Hub

OPEC Hubs are eager to hear from individuals currently working as parenting educators or interested in becoming parenting educators. Check with your local Hub about the availability of open volunteer or paid opportunities to support parenting education in your community. In addition, many OPEC Hubs offer free or low-cost professional development workshops that can help you get started or enhance your existing skills. OPEC Hubs may have upcoming opportunities for you to participate in workshops on a range of topics related to supporting children and families (e.g., adult learning, child and youth development, trauma-informed care) as well as trainings in facilitation and evidence-based curricula.

Step 2: Complete the online Essentials of Parenting Education Professional Practice course

In this FREE online course, facilitators learn and review the foundations of professional practice for parenting educators through interactive technology, videos, graphics, and readings in a series of seven modules:

1. Creating a Parenting Education Professional Development System in Oregon
2. Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity
3. Ethical and Professional Practice (Part 1)
4. Ethical and Professional Practice (Part 2)
5. Foundational Facilitation Skills (Part 1)
6. Foundational Facilitation Skills (Part 2)
7. Fidelity and Evaluation in Program Implementation

Professionals who complete all seven modules receive a certificate for completion for four training hours. To get started, visit <https://orparenting.org/parent-educators/essentials-modules/>

Step 3: Study the Foundations of Facilitation for Parenting Educators training materials

This comprehensive facilitation manual will provide you with a study guide to strengthen your parenting educator knowledge, skills, and confidence when facilitating groups serving diverse populations of families. Foundations of Facilitation materials cover topics, including understanding and applying adult learning principles, understanding and practicing a variety of facilitation skills, growing the ability to recognize, value and engage diverse participants, and maintaining fidelity to the curriculum. To access these materials, visit <https://www.tfff.org/foundations-facilitation>

Step 4: Plan Your Professional Development

Familiarize yourself with the Core Knowledge and Skills for Parenting Educators (<https://orparenting.org/parent-educators/core-knowledge-skills/>). Reach out to your local OPEC Hub and ask if they are offering or aware of any trainings that can support your development as a parenting educator. Knowledge in trauma informed practices, adverse childhood experiences (ACES), child development, positive parenting strategies, cultural competency, and health equity are some of the training topics that can support you in your skillset as a parenting educator



10 STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED AS A PARENTING EDUCATOR

Step 5: Get connected with other professionals

Join the **Oregon Parenting Education Network (OrPEN)** to receive an online monthly newsletter with parenting education resources, job announcements, and professional development opportunities. Sign up for free at <https://orparenting.org/parent-educators/joinorpen>.

There is also a **National Parenting Education Network (NPEEN)** that you can learn more about [here](#). By joining a professional organization for parenting educators you stay connected with up-to-date resources and learn from other professionals.

Step 6: Attend the Oregon Parenting Educators Conference & Training Institute

The Oregon Parenting Educators Conference and Training Institute is a two-day conference held at Oregon State University in Corvallis each May. The Conference showcases a keynote speaker, and several workshop and poster presentations throughout the day covering research information, awareness, and practical application strategies that support effective parenting education.

The Training Institute provides a day of longer and more in-depth training sessions focusing on a variety of topics for professionals working with children and families. More information can be found at <https://health.oregonstate.edu/hallie-ford/oregon-parenting-educators-conference>

Step 7: Track your Progress

Register for a free account in the OPEC Recognition System to track your professional development hours and experience. If you are already tracking your professional development through the Oregon Registry (ORO), you can directly import your hours into the OPEC Recognition System. This is a great way to build your Parenting Educator portfolio to showcase your education, training, and experience. Get started at <https://orparenting.org/parent-educators/recognition-system/>.

Step 8: Gain Experience

After receiving training in an evidence-based curriculum and building your skills as a parenting educator, look for opportunities to gain experience through delivering parenting education series and workshops in your community. Look for opportunities to observe other parenting educators delivering their classes to learn from their strategies and experiences. If possible, begin by co-facilitating classes with a more experienced parenting educator.

Step 9: Apply for Recognition

As you build your portfolio in the OPEC Recognition System, your education, training, and experience hours will be applied to one of five recognition designations. When all the criteria has been met you will be eligible to apply for recognition. Review the [recognition system criteria and guidelines](#) and [recognition chart](#) to learn more.

Step 10: Continue Teaching and Learning

The field of parenting education and child development is ever growing and expanding. Continue to grow in your knowledge, skills, and experience. Participate in trainings that allow you to deliver a range of evidence-based and culturally responsive curricula. Find opportunities to learn more about trauma-informed care, resilience, cultural responsiveness, facilitation, and more.

