

Family Life Education Content Areas: Content and Practice Guidelines

These guidelines represent the content from the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) *University and College Curriculum Guidelines* and *Competencies for Family Life Educators*, developed by faculty at Weber State University. It represents the knowledge, skills, and abilities included within the examination for the Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) designation. These content areas include theory, research, and practice within the field of family life education (FLE). Examples of some of these core theories/frameworks/perspectives include family systems, ecosystems, individual and family development, exchange, symbolic interaction, conflict, feminist, and stress.

The content areas are illustrated in the *Family Life Education Framework* (Bredehoft & Walcheski, 2011), which outlines all ten content areas specific to four age groups: childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and older adulthood. The four age groups demonstrate the principle that FLE is relevant to individuals and families across the lifespan. The fact that FLE is inclusive of all audiences is represented by the words *Value; Diverse Cultures, Communities, and Individuals*; and *Justice*, that are woven throughout the framework. Additionally, FLE has a foundation in systems thinking (both family systems and larger ecosystems) and this systems approach is represented by the words “within the context of the family system” and “reciprocal interactions between family and ecosystem” that also are woven throughout the framework.

In 2007 and again in 2014 NCFR, along with Schroeder Measurement Technologies, conducted a job analysis survey which was distributed to current Certified Family Life Educators who were asked to rate the importance of each knowledge, skill, and ability in the content outline to competent practice. The results of the surveys were used to establish the content outline which represents the foundation of the CFLE Exam.

There are two parts to each of the following 10 content areas. The first is *Content* which gives an overview of the subject matter included within this content area. The second component includes *Practice* which relates to the tasks expected of an entry-level CFLE. The *Practice* segment is the basis of the questions in the CFLE exam.

I. FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN SOCIETAL CONTEXTS (12% of the exam)

Content: An understanding of families and their relationships to other institutions, such as the educational, governmental, religious, healthcare, and occupational institutions in society.

e.g., Research and theories related to: Structures and Functions; Cultural Variations (family heritage, social class, geography, ethnicity, race & religion); Dating, Courtship, Marital Choice; Kinship; Cross-Cultural & Minority (understanding of lifestyles of minority families & the lifestyles of families in various societies around the world); Changing Gender Roles (role expectations & behaviors of courtship partners, marital partners, parents & children, siblings, & extended kin); Demographic Trends; Historical Issues; Work/leisure & Family Relationships; Societal Relations (reciprocal influence of the major social institutions & families, i.e., governmental, religious, educational, healthcare, & economic).

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a. Identify the characteristics, diversity, and impact of local, national, and global social systems on individuals and families
- b. Identify factors (e.g., media, marketing, technology, economics, social movements, war, natural disasters, environment, sustainability) influencing individuals and families from both contemporary and historical perspectives
- c. Identify factors that influence the relationship between work, personal, and family life
- d. Identify social and cultural influences affecting dating, courtship, partner/marital choice and relationships, family composition, and family life
- e. Recognize the reciprocal interaction between individuals, families, and various social systems (e.g., workplace, health, legal, educational, religious/spiritual)

- f. Assess the impact of demographics (e.g., class, race, ethnicity, religion, generation, gender, sexual orientation) on contemporary families

II. INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF FAMILIES (12% of the exam)

Content: An understanding of family strengths and weaknesses and how family members relate to each other.

e.g., Research and theories related to: Internal Social Processes (including cooperation & conflict); Communication (patterns & problems in husband-wife relationships & in parent-child relationships, including stress & conflict management); Conflict Management; Decision-making and Goal-setting; Normal Family Stresses (transition periods in the family life cycle, three-generation households, caring for the elderly, & dual careers); Family Stress & Crises (divorce, remarriage, death, economic uncertainty & hardship, violence, substance abuse); Special Needs in Families (including adoptive, foster, migrant, low income, military, & blended families as well as those members with chronic illness and/or disabilities).

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a. Recognize and define healthy and unhealthy characteristics pertaining to:
 1. Family relationships
 2. Family development
- b. Analyze family functioning using various theoretical perspectives
- c. Assess family dynamics from a systems perspective
- d. Analyze family dynamics in response to normative and non-normative stressors
- e. Analyze family dynamics in response to stress, crises, and trauma
- f. Facilitate and strengthen communication processes, conflict-management, and problem-solving skills
- g. Develop, recognize, and reinforce strategies that help families function effectively

III. HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE LIFESPAN (12% of the exam)

Content: An understanding of the developmental changes (both typical and atypical) of individuals in families across the lifespan. Based on knowledge of physical, emotional, cognitive, social, moral, and personality aspects.

e.g., Research and theories related to: Prenatal; Infancy; Early and Middle Childhood; Adolescence; Adulthood; Aging.

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a. Identify developmental stages, transitions, elements and challenges throughout the lifespan
- b. Recognize reciprocal influences:
 1. Individual development on families
 2. Family development on individuals
- c. Recognize the impact of individual health and wellness on families
- d. Assist individuals and families in effective developmental transitions
- e. Apply appropriate practices based on theories of human growth and development to individuals and families
- f. Recognize socio-ecological influences on human development across the lifespan (e.g. sexual/gender identity, trauma, etc.)

IV. HUMAN SEXUALITY ACROSS THE LIFESPAN (8% of the exam)

Content: An understanding of the physiological, psychological, and social aspects of sexual development across the lifespan, so as to achieve healthy sexual adjustment.

e.g., Research and theories related to: Reproductive Physiology; Biological Determinants; Emotional and Psychological Aspects of Sexual Involvement; Sexual Behaviors; Sexual Values & Decision-Making; Family Planning; Physiological & Psychological Aspects of Sexual Response; Influence of Sexual Involvement on Interpersonal Relationships.

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a. Recognize the biological aspects of human sexuality (e.g., sexual functioning, reproductive health, family planning, sexually transmitted infections)

- b. Recognize the psycho-social aspects of human sexuality:
 - 1. Characteristics of healthy and unhealthy sexual relationships
 - 2. Interpersonal dynamics of sexual intimacy
 - 3. Risk factors (e.g., substance abuse, social pressures, media)
- c. Address human sexuality from value-respectful positions

V. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (9% of the exam)

Content: An understanding of the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

e.g., Research and theories related to: Self and Others; Communication Skills (listening, empathy, self-disclosure, decision making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution); Intimacy, Love, Romance; Relating to Others with Respect, Sincerity, & Responsibility.

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a. Recognize the impact of personality and communication styles
- b. Recognize the developmental stages of relationships
- c. Analyze interpersonal relationships using various theoretical perspectives
- d. Develop and implement relationship enhancement and enrichment strategies
- e. Develop and implement effective communication, problem solving, and anger and conflict management strategies
- f. Recognize the impact of violence and coercion in interpersonal relationships
- g. Recognize the influence of unhealthy coping strategies (e.g., substance use, disordered eating, avoidance) on interpersonal relationships

VI. FAMILY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (10% of the exam)

Content: An understanding of the decisions individuals and families make about developing and allocating resources including time, money, material assets, energy, friends, neighbors, and space, to meet their goals.

e.g., Research and theories related to: Goal Setting and Decision-Making; Development and Allocation of Resources; Social Environment Influences; Life Cycle and Family Structure Influences; Consumer Issues and Decisions.

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a. Recognize the multiplicity of resources families need, acquire, and manage (e.g., personal, familial, professional, community, environmental)
- b. Recognize and facilitate the reciprocal relationship between individual/family/community choices and resources
- c. Apply and facilitate effective decision-making processes (e.g., assessment of individual and family needs, identification and evaluation of options and resources, implementation of decision, evaluation of outcomes)
- d. Understand the impact of values and goals in the decision-making process
- e. Apply organizational and time management strategies
- f. Apply basic financial management tools and principles
- g. Inform individuals and families of consumer rights, responsibilities, and choices of action/advocacy

VII. PARENTING EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE (10% of the exam)

Content: An understanding of how parents teach, guide and influence children and adolescents as well as the changing nature, dynamics and needs of the parent/child relationship across the lifespan.

e.g., Research and theories related to: Parenting Rights and Responsibilities; Parenting Practices/Processes; Parent/Child Relationships; Variation in Parenting Solutions; Changing Parenting Roles across the Lifespan.

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a. Promote healthy parenting from systems and lifespan perspectives
- b. Promote healthy parenting from a child's and parent's developmental perspective
- c. Apply strategies based on the child's age/stage of development to promote effective developmental outcomes
- d. Identify different parenting styles and their associated psychological, social, and behavioral outcomes
- e. Analyze various parenting programs, models, and principles

- f. Evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of various parenting strategies
- g. Recognize various parenting roles (e.g., father/mother, grandparents and other caregivers) and their impact on and contribution to individuals and families
- h. Recognize parenting issues within various family structures (e.g., single, blended, same-sex)
- i. Recognize the impact of societal trends on parenting (e.g., technology, substance abuse, media)
- j. Recognize the influence of cultural differences and diversity
- k. Identify strategies to support children in various settings (e.g., schools, legal system, and health care)
- l. Recognize the various pathways to parenting and their associated issues and challenges, (e.g., assisted reproduction, adoption, childbirth, blending)

VIII. FAMILY LAW AND PUBLIC POLICY (8% of the exam)

Content: An understanding of legal issues, policies, and laws influencing the well-being of families.

e.g., Research and theories related to: Family and the Law (relating to marriage, divorce, family support, child custody, child protection and rights, and family planning); Family and Social Services; Family and Education; Family and the Economy; Family and Religion; Policy and the Family (public policy as it affects the family, including tax, civil rights, Social Security, economic support laws, and regulations).

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a. Understand the following policy processes (e.g., policy formation, policy implementation, policy evaluation)
- b. Identify current laws, public policies, and initiatives that regulate and influence professional conduct and services
- c. Identify current laws, public policies, and initiatives that affect families
- d. Distinguish between lobbying, policy evaluation, analysis, education, and advocacy
- e. Analyze policy resources for evidence of bias (e.g., unintended, inherent, political, self-interest)
- f. Inform families, communities, and policy makers about public policies, initiatives, and legislation that affect families at local, state, and national levels

IX. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND PRACTICE (7% of the exam)

Content: An understanding of the character and quality of human social conduct, and the ability to critically examine ethical questions and issues as they relate to professional practice.

e.g., Research and theories related to: Formation of Social Attitudes and Values; Recognizing and Respecting the Diversity of Values and the Complexity of Value Choice in a Pluralistic Society; Examining Value Systems and Ideologies Systematically and Objectively; Social Consequences of Value Choices; Recognizing the Ethical Implications of Social and Technological Changes, Ethics of Professional Practice.

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a. Demonstrate professional attitudes, values, behaviors, and responsibilities to clients, colleagues, and the broader community, that are reflective of ethical standards and practice
 - 1. Understand the domains and scope of practice for family life educators and the role of collaboration
 - 2. Establish and maintain appropriate personal and professional boundaries
 - 3. Create a personal ethics plan to support/reflect the standards of the profession
 - 4. Maintain current knowledge and skills in the field
- b. Evaluate, differentiate, and apply diverse approaches to ethical issues and dilemmas
- c. Identify and apply appropriate strategies to deal with conflicting values
- d. Demonstrate respect for diverse cultural values

X. FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION METHODOLOGY (12% of the exam)

Content: An understanding of the general philosophy and broad principles of family life education in conjunction with the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate such educational programs.

e.g., Research and theories related to: Planning and Implementing; Evaluation (materials, student progress, and program effectiveness); Education Techniques; Sensitivity to Others (to enhance educational effectiveness); Sensitivity to Community Concerns and Values (understanding of the public relations process).

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a. Employ a variety of strategies to identify and meet the needs of different audiences
- b. Employ techniques and technologies to promote application of information in the learner's environment
- c. Create learning environments that are respectful of individual vulnerabilities, needs, and learning styles
- d. Demonstrate group process and facilitation skills
- e. Demonstrate sensitivity to diversity and community needs, concerns, and interests
- f. Develop culturally-competent educational materials and learning experiences
- g. Identify appropriate sources for evidence-based information
- h. Implement evidence-based programs
- i. Design educational experiences:
 1. Needs assessment
 2. Goals and objectives
 3. Content development
 4. Implementation
 5. Evaluation/outcome measures
- j. Promote and market educational programs
- k. Implement adult education principles into work with individuals, parents, and families

References

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