



Professional Organizations and Associations - Why Join?

You might wonder why it's important to join professional organizations when time and money are limited. One of the major goals of those of us who work in early childhood is to increase the professionalization of these careers - in terms of public perception (to counter-act the idea that "It's just babysitting!"), as well as compensation and advancement. One person has little impact, but a large, national group of like-minded people can, and does, have a huge impact.

Other reasons to join with others who share your interests in early childhood include:

Networking opportunities: most professional organizations sponsor conferences and meetings that let you meet other professionals, share ideas, learn from others, and make friends. You can also get support, develop leadership skills by volunteering on committees, and make your voice heard. This networking can be person-to-person and in chat rooms or online discussion groups, making it convenient and affordable.

Access to educational opportunities: as a member of an organization you'll get discounts to attend conferences; have greater access to webinars; often have a reduced price to subscribe to journals; get continuing education credits; and many other chances to learn and advance.

Access to job listings: members often have access to job postings that non-members might not have; some organizations provide help with resume writing, etc.; listing your membership in professional organizations on your resume conveys your commitment to professional development to future employers and can give you an edge in obtaining a job.

Here are some organizations you might consider:

The Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children: <http://coloradoaeyc.org>

The National Association for the Education of Young Children: <http://www.naeyc.org>

Child Care Aware: <http://childcareaware.org>

National Association for Family Child Care: <http://www.nafcc.org>

National Head Start Association: <http://www.nhsa.org>

The Council for Exceptional Children - Division for Early Childhood: <http://www.dec-sped.org>

Zero to Three: <http://www.zerotothree.org>

National Association of Child Care Professionals: <http://www.naccp.org>