**[Community Advocacy and Professional Development Experiences](https://ctc.blackboard.com/webapps/assignment/uploadAssignment?content_id=_8611472_1&course_id=_220808_1&group_id=&mode=view)**

The purpose of this assignment is for you to advocate for children and give back to your community by attending professional conferences and by volunteering in the community surrounding the center in which you serve. You will be required to participate in a total of four experiences in which you either volunteer at a community agency/event, or attend a local conference. **As with all of our assignments in this class, please consider using your work here in your own professional career portfolio.**

**Planning the Experiences**

Your first goal is to identify ways that you can volunteer or participate in volunteer and professional development opportunities in your community. To help give you ideas of what your **four** experiences for this assignment might include, the following lists are examples of community agencies/events you could contact or conferences you could attend.

**Community Agencies & Events for Volunteer Participation**

* Boys and Girls Clubs
* Any local events centered around children, or families with children
* YMCA
* Family block parties
* Local health fairs or screenings
* Parenting classes
* Reading to children at local libraries
* Helping with open houses
* Any other local volunteer work that centers around children, or families with children

**Conference Events to Attend for Professional Development**

* Lectures at local community colleges or universities
* Professional gatherings for ideas, policy, research, advocacy, etc.
* Workshops and training sessions
* Any other local professional development opportunities that center around careers in early childhood care and education

There are many ways you can discover when and where events or conferences will occur in your community. A good starting point would be to consult your mentor or program director for knowledge of any local events or gatherings that may be going on. You should also check community bulletin boards, the Internet, local newspapers, community newsletters, etc.

All four of your choices for this assignment must meet the following criteria:

* Your experience must center on *children, or families that have children.*
* Your experiences must take place *outside* the program where you work
* You must complete and provide documentation for a total of *four* (4) different experiences.

**Engaging in the Experiences**

Once you decide on your experiences, schedule your participation and plan to attend. This assignment is ongoing, and you may complete your four experiences throughout the course of the term. When you attend each of your four experiences, be sure to write a brief description of the event/conference (What was it? Where was it? What was its goal? Who was there, etc.?) While you are attending the event or conference, collect any artifacts that are relevant to you and your professional development.

Also, be sure to get the names and addresses of anyone who facilitated your participation in each experience. You will use this information to write and send “thank-you” letters. After you have completed your experiences, please write and mail a thank you letter to all agencies or people who helped you participate. Submit copies of your “thank you” letters with the assignment.

**Reporting on the Experiences**

Organize your notes and artifacts and write a 250-word summary for **each** of the four experiences. Include answers to the following questions in the summaries:

* What was the experience?
* Why did you choose this particular experience?
* What did you learn from this experience?
* What information did you gain that could help your early childhood program?

**To Successfully Complete the Community and Professional Development Assignment:**

* Plan to participate in four volunteer and/or professional development experiences in your community. All of the experiences you choose should focus on children, or families with children.
* Participate in four experiences throughout the course of the term.
* Write and send “thank you” letters to all agencies or people who facilitated your participation.
* Write a 250-word report of **each** experience (total of four).
* Submit scanned copies of any artifacts you collected, along with your 250-word reports and “thank you” letters. Please submit all required files in one folder.