

Family Life Education Content Areas: Content and Practice Guidelines

The “practice” segment is the basis for questions in the CFLE exam.

These guidelines represent the content from the *University and College Curriculum Guidelines* and 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. 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 FLE content areas are illustrated in the Lifespan Family Life Education (FLE) framework (Bredehoft, 1997), 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 “multicultural, gender fair, and special needs aware” that are woven throughout the framework. Finally, 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.

There are two parts to each of the following 10 content areas. The first is “Content” which gives an overview of the subject matter in this area from the *University and College Curriculum Guidelines*. The second component includes “Practice” which relates to the tasks expected of an entry-level CFLE. **This “practice” segment is the basis of questions in the CFLE exam.**

I FAMILIES & INDIVIDUALS IN SOCIETAL CONTEXTS

13% of Exam

Content: Families in Society - An understanding of families and their relationships to other institutions, such as the educational, governmental, religious, 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, & economic).

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

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

II INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF FAMILIES

12% of Exam

Content: An understanding of family strengths and weaknesses and how family members relate to each other. e.g., Research & 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 with disabled members).

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a Recognize & define healthy & 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 Evaluate family dynamics in response to normative & non-normative stressors
- e Evaluate family dynamics in response to crises
- f Facilitate & strengthen communication processes, conflict-management, & problem-solving skills
- g Develop, recognize, & reinforce strategies that help families function effectively

III HUMAN GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN

12% of 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, tasks, & 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 & wellness on families
- d Assist individuals & families in effective developmental transitions
- e Apply appropriate practices based on theories of human growth & development to individuals & families

IV HUMAN SEXUALITY

8% of 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
 1. sexual functioning
 2. reproductive health
 3. family planning
 4. sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- b Recognize the psycho-social aspects of human sexuality

1. characteristics of healthy & ethical sexual relationships
 2. interpersonal dynamics of sexual intimacy
 3. risk factors (e.g., substance abuse, social pressures, media)
- c Address human sexuality from a value-respectful position

V INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

9% of 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 & communication styles
- b Recognize the developmental stages of relationships
- c Analyze interpersonal relationships using various theoretical perspectives
- d Develop & implement relationship enhancement & enrichment strategies
- e Develop & implement effective communication, problem solving, & conflict management strategies
- f Communicate aspects of relationships within the context of their developmental stages

VI FAMILY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

10% of 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 Identify personal, familial, professional, & community resources available to families
- b Recognize the reciprocal relationship between individual/family/community choices & resources
- c Apply value-clarification strategies to decision-making
- d Apply goal-setting strategies & evaluate their outcomes
- e Apply decision-making strategies
- f Apply organizational & time management strategies
- g Apply basic financial management tools & principles
- h Inform individuals & families of consumer rights, responsibilities, & choices of action/ advocacy
- i Apply stress management strategies

VII PARENTING EDUCATION & GUIDANCE

11% of 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 Life Cycle.

Practice—A CFLE is prepared to:

- a Promote healthy parenting from a systems perspective
- b Promote healthy parenting from a child's & parents developmental perspective
- c Apply strategies based on the child's age/stage of development to promote effective developmental outcomes
- d Identify different parenting styles & their associated psychological, social, & behavioral outcomes
- e Promote various parenting models, principles, & strategies
- f Evaluate the effectiveness & appropriateness of various parenting strategies
- g Recognize various parenting roles (e.g., father/mother, grandparents, other caregivers) & their impact on

- & contribution to individuals & 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 & diversity
- k Identify strategies to advocate for children in various settings (e.g. schools, legal system, healthcare)
- l Recognize the various pathways to parenting & their associated issues & challenges, (e.g. assisted reproduction, adoption, childbirth, blending)

VIII FAMILY LAW & PUBLIC POLICY

8% of Exam

Content: An understanding of legal issues, policies, and laws influencing the well being of families.
e.g., 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 Identify current law, public policy, & initiatives that regulate & influence professional conduct & services
- b Identify current laws, public policies, & initiatives that affect families
- c Inform families, communities, & policy makers about public policies, initiatives, & legislation that affect families at local, state, & national levels

IX PROFESSIONAL ETHICS & PRACTICE

5% of 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, & responsibilities to clients, colleagues, & the broader community, that are reflective of ethical standards & practice
- b Evaluate, differentiate, & apply diverse approaches to ethical issues & dilemmas
- c Identify & apply appropriate strategies to deal with conflicting values
- d Demonstrate respect for diverse cultural values & ethical standards

X FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION METHODOLOGY

12% of 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, & 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 current educational strategies
- b Employ techniques to promote application of information in the learner's environment
- c Create learning environments that are respectful of individual vulnerabilities, needs, & learning styles
- d Demonstrate sensitivity to diversity & community needs, concerns, & interests
- e Develop culturally-competent educational materials & learning experiences
- f Identify appropriate sources for evidence-based information
- g Develop educational experiences
 1. needs assessment

2. goals & objectives
 3. content development
 4. implementation
 5. evaluation/outcome measures
- h Promote & market educational programs
 - i Implement adult education principles into work with families & parents
 - j Establish & maintain appropriate personal & professional boundaries

References

- Bredehoft, D.J. & Cassidy, D. (Eds.) (1995). Family life education curriculum guidelines (2nd ed.). Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations.
- Bredehoft, D.J. (Ed.). 1997. *Life span family life education*. (2nd ed.) [Poster]. Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations.
- National Council on Family Relations. (2007). Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) Exam Content Outline. In Bredehoft, D.J. & Walcheski, M.J. (Eds). *Family Life Education: Integrating Theory and Practice*. (2nd ed.). (pp. 261-263).