MERIT: New & Improved!

Spring 2014

Building MERIT

The Department of Early Learning launched the Managed Education and Registry Information Tool (MERIT) in 2011. Early learning professionals use this tool to:

- Find training by state-approved trainers.
- Maintain a record of their professional training and education.
- Apply for portable background checks.
- Connect to awards and other professional opportunities.

Feedback from MERIT's many users showed us that the concept was great, but the tool itself could be hard to use.

2013 Usability Study

We worked with Anthro-Tech, a user-centered design firm, to learn more about MERIT's pros and cons. In 2013, we gathered and assessed input from the professionals who use MERIT. This research included:

- A survey of users (Nearly 2,000 people participated!)
- A baseline usability study (Anthro-Tech's researchers observed participants as they accessed MERIT and performed real tasks.)

Now, we're using the resulting data and recommendations to improve MERIT.

We're Changing MERIT for the Better

We've gathered feedback from early learning professionals across the state, and now we're using it to streamline MERIT. Soon, this helpful tool will be easier and quicker to use.

The Department of Early Learning is redesigning MERIT in response to input from early learning professionals and the recommendations that we collected from our usability study in 2013. The new, user-friendly version of MERIT will have a streamlined design, clearer navigation, and easy step-by-step directions. We've also simplified many forms and tasks.

What's New?

Among other changes, we're improving the layout: Simple, clean pages will make it easier for early learning professionals to find what they need and complete their tasks quickly.

Participants in our survey said that they see value in MERIT. They like that it helps them keep track of professional activities, such as training, and monitor the status of portable background checks.

The usability study showed that certain tasks are especially difficult and time-consuming, so we're focusing on making them easier. For example:

- We're replacing the career lattice and related award application with a new model that still recognizes and honors each professional's education and training, but is much easier to understand.
- We're creating a more user-friendly version of the state-approved trainer application.
- We're making it easier for trainers to manage their attendance rosters.

It's a big job, but the improvements are already underway. So, stay tuned! We'll begin rolling out the changes this summer and fall.