



# Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment

Revised April 2005,

**A position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children**

*Endorsed by the Association for Childhood Education International*

*Adopted by the National Association for Family Child Care*

## Preamble

NAEYC recognizes that those who work with young children face many daily decisions that have moral and ethical implications. The **NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct** offers guidelines for responsible behavior and sets forth a common basis for resolving the principal ethical dilemmas encountered in early childhood care and education. The **Statement of Commitment** is not part of the Code but is a personal acknowledgement of an individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education.

The primary focus of the Code is on daily practice with children and their families in programs for children from birth through 8 years of age, such as infant/toddler programs, preschool and prekindergarten programs, child care centers, hospital and child life settings, family child care homes, kindergartens, and primary classrooms. When the issues involve young children, then these provisions also apply to specialists who do not work directly with children, including program administrators, parent educators, early childhood adult educators, and officials with responsibility for program monitoring and licensing. (Note: See also the "Code of Ethical Conduct: Supplement for Early Childhood Adult Educators," online at [www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/ethics04.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/ethics04.pdf) and the "Code of Ethical Conduct: Supplement for Early Childhood Program Administrators," online at [http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/files/positions/PSETH05\\_supp.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/files/positions/PSETH05_supp.pdf))

## Core values

Standards of ethical behavior in early childhood care and education are based on commitment to the following core values that are deeply rooted in the history of the field of early childhood care and education. We have made a commitment to

- A precious childhood as a noble and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- A precious and strong bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are beings of good and goodness in the context of family, culture,\* community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect the rights in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect

\* The term *culture* includes ethnicity, racial identity, economic level, family structure, language, and religious and political beliefs, which profoundly influence each child's development and relationships with the world.

## Conceptual framework

The Code sets forth a framework of professional responsibilities in four sections. Each section addresses an area of professional relationship: (1) with children, (2) with families, (3) among colleagues and (4) with the community and society. Each section includes an introduction to the importance of the responsibility of the early childhood profession in that context. The introduction is followed by a set of ideals (I) that describe the professional attitude and by a set of principles (P) describing practices that are encouraged, prohibited, or mixed.

The **ideals** describe the aspirations of the profession. The **principles** guide conduct and describe actions in resolving ethical dilemmas.\* Both ideals and principles are intended to direct actions to those decisions which, when responsibly considered, can guide the best course for conscientious decision making. While the Code provides specific direction for addressing some ethical dilemmas, many others will require the profession to combine the guidance of the Code with professional judgment.

The ideals and principles in this Code represent a shared framework of professional responsibilities that affirm our commitment to the collective good of our field. The Code publicly acknowledges the responsibilities that we in the field have assumed, and in so doing sets a course of ethical behavior in our work. Principles help us face the actions with ethical dimensions and help us seek guidance in the applicable areas of this Code and in the spirit that informs the whole.

Often the right answer to the best ethical course of action is not obvious. The answer may be no easier to attain, or more difficult to handle in the action. When one is in a moral predicament, another, we face an ethical dilemma. When we face a dilemma, it is our professional responsibility to consult the Code and all relevant standards to find the most ethical resolution.

## Section I

### Ethical Responsibilities to Children

Childhood is a noble and valuable stage in the human life cycle. Our primary responsibility is to provide care and education in ensuring that a safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsible environment for each child. We are committed

to ensuring children's development and learning; respecting individual differences; and helping children learn to love, laugh, and cooperate. We are also committed to promoting children's self-awareness, competence, self-worth, resilience, and physical well-being.

### Ideals

- I.1.1** To be familiar with the knowledge base of early childhood care and education and to stay informed through continuing education and learning.
- I.1.2** To base program practices on current knowledge and research in the field of early childhood education, child development, and related disciplines as well as on a solid knowledge of each child.
- I.1.3** To recognize and respect the individual abilities and potential of each child.
- I.1.4** To appreciate the unique abilities of children and their dependence on adults.
- I.1.5** To create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development and that respect their dignity and their contributions.
- I.1.6** To set expectations in learning and to create an environment that allows the child to be successful, that is based on the goals for which the child is designed, and that has the potential to benefit the child.
- I.1.7** To set expectations information on child development and learning, to be involved in the child's education, and to identify children who may need additional services.
- I.1.8** To promote the right of each child to learn and to learn in an inclusive environment that meets the needs of children with and without disabilities.
- I.1.9** To advocate for and ensure that all children, including those with special needs, have access to the services needed to be successful.
- I.1.10** To ensure that each child's culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure are recognized and valued in the program.

**I.1.11** To provide all children with experience in a language that the know, as well as to ensure children in maintaining the use of their home language and in learning English.

**I.1.12** To work with families to provide a safe and smooth transition for children and families from one program to the next.

\* The responsibility is a goal of the principles for each ideal.



**I-2.4** To listen to families, acknowledge and build on their strengths and competencies and learn from families as they work with them in their work of nurturing children.

**I-2.5** To respect the dignity and efficacy of each

**P-3A.3** We shall exercise care in evaluating the integrity of the professional and the professional conduct of co-operators. Statements should be based on firsthand knowledge, not hearsay, and relevant to the interests of children and programs.

**P-3A.4** We shall not retaliate in practice that discriminate against a co-operator because of sex, race, na-

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## Section IV

### Ethical Responsibilities to Community and Society

**P-4.6** We shall be familiar with laws and regulations that seek to protect the children in our program and be vigilant in ensuring that the laws and regulations are followed.

**P-4.7** When we become aware of a practice or situation that endangers the health, safety, or well-being of children, we have an ethical responsibility to protect children or inform a parent and/or someone who can.

**P-4.8** We shall not practice in activities that are in violation of laws and regulations that protect the children in our program.

**P-4.9** When we have evidence that an early childhood program is violating laws or regulations protecting children, we shall report the violation to a responsible authority who can be expected to remedy the situation.

**P-4.10** When a program violates or potentially violates this Code, it is, if possible, our responsibility to disclose the evidence, to disclose the identity of that program.



**Code of Ethics.** Define the code of ethics of the field and provide guidance for healthcare professionals who do when the encounter concerning obligations and responsibilities in their work.

**Values.** Qualities or principles that individuals believe to be desirable or worthwhile and that they use to inform their behavior for others and for the world in which they live.

**Core Values.** Commitments held by a profession that are consciously and knowingly embraced by its practitioners because they make a contribution to society. There is a difference between personal values and the code of ethics of a profession.

**Morality.** Personalities of having good, right, and noble; their beliefs about their obligations and their ideas about how they should behave.

**Ethics.** The study of right and wrong, good and obligation, that involves critical reflection on moral and the ability to make choices between values and the examination of the moral dimension of relationship.

**Professional Ethics.** The moral commitments of a profession that involve moral reflection that extends

and enhances the personal moral actions being in their work, that concern actions of right and wrong in the workplace, and that help individuals solve moral dilemmas that encounter in their work.



## Statement of Commitment\*

As an individual who works with young children, I commit myself to fulfilling the moral values of early childhood education as they are reflected in the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. To the best of my ability, I will

- Nurture healthy children.
- Engage in ethical practices for young children as based on current knowledge and research of child development and early childhood education.
- Respect and support families in their role of nurturing children.
- Respect colleagues in early childhood care and education and support them in maintaining the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
- Serve as an advocate for children, their families, and their teachers in community and society.
- Stay informed of and maintain high standards of professional conduct.
- Engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection, realizing that personal characteristics, biases, and beliefs have an impact on children and families.
- Be open to new ideas and be willing to learn from the suggestions of others.
- Continue to learn, grow, and contribute as a professional.
- Honor the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.

\* This Statement of Commitment is not a part of the Code but is a personal acknowledgment of the individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive moral values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education. It is recognition of the moral obligations that lead to an individual becoming a part of the profession.