Code of Ethics

Vision

Professionals who adhere to this Code of Ethics act in the best interests of all children and work collectively to be an influential voice for them.

Preamble

Early Childhood Australia recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been nurturing and teaching children on this land for thousands of years. The revised Code of Ethics acknowledges the ethical traditions of caring for children and families and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being. This Code of Ethics is also informed by the principles laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

A Code of Ethics is an aspirational framework for reflection about the ethical responsibilities of childhood professionals who work with or on behalf of children and families. In this Code of Ethics the protection and wellbeing of children is paramount and therefore speaking out or taking action in the presence of unethical practice is an essential professional responsibility.

Ethics is a practical matter that involves thinking about everyday actions and decision making, either individually or collectively, and responding with respect to all concerned. Childhood professionals need to be mindful of the particular ethical challenges inherent in using social media and digital technologies.

The Code of Ethics recognises that childhood professionals are in a unique position of trust and influence in their relationships with children, families, colleagues and the community, therefore professional accountability is essential.
Core Principles

The core principles in this Code of Ethics are based on the fundamental and prized values of our profession. They act as a compass to calibrate our decision making in relation to our ethical responsibilities. These core principles respect and maintain the rights and dignity of children, families, colleagues and community.

- Children have unique potentials and capacities as contributors in their community.
- Children are global citizens with agency, who lead their own and others learning.
- Partnership with families and community, support shared responsibility for children’s learning, development and wellbeing.
- Democratic, fair and inclusive practices promote equity and a strong sense of belonging.
- Everyone has the right to respectful, responsive and reciprocal relationships.
- Play and leisure are central to children’s learning, development and wellbeing.
- Quality education and care is continually informed by research, inquiry and practice based evidence.

Commitments to action

In relation to children I will:

- Act in the best interests of all children acknowledging them as capable learners with agency and cultural and linguistic rights.
- Ensure childhood is about being in the here and now and not solely about preparation for the future.
- Collaborate with children as global and active citizens participating in different communities and support understanding of our shared responsibilities to the environment and humanity.
- Respect the special relationship between children and their families and incorporate this perspective in all my interactions with children.
- Acknowledge the uniqueness of children’s strengths, interests and abilities and ensure children are not discriminated against on the basis of gender, age, ability, economic status, family structure, lifestyle, ethnicity, religion, language, culture, or national origin.
- Negotiate children’s participation in research, by taking into account their safety, privacy and levels of fatigue and interest.
- Seek the child’s perspective in the teaching, learning and assessment process and be mindful of how, where and with whom the evidence of learning is shared.
- Work collaboratively with children to provide worthwhile teaching and learning experiences that acknowledge and engage children’s active minds.
In relation to families, I will:

- Support families in their role as their child’s first and most important teacher with the right to make decisions about their children.
- Listen and learn with families to ensure shared decision making, planning and assessment practices in relation to their child’s learning, development and wellbeing.
- Develop positive relationships and partnerships based on respect and open communication to support their engagement and a strong sense of belonging.
- Respect and respond to the uniqueness of each family and learn about their circumstances, culture, family structure, customs, language, beliefs and kinship systems.
- Maintain confidentiality and respect a family’s right to privacy.

In relation to community and society, I will:

- Learn about local community contexts, circumstances and aspirations in order to create responsive programs to enhance children’s learning, development and wellbeing.
- Collaborate with people, services and agencies to develop shared understandings and actions that support children and families.
- Use research and practice based evidence to advocate for a society in which all children have access to high quality education and care.
- Promote the value of children’s contribution as citizens to the development of strong communities.
- Work to promote the importance of childhood and an understanding of how children learn and develop in order to inform programs and systems of assessment that benefit children.
- Advocate for the development and implementation of laws and policies that promote the rights and best interest of children and families.

In relation to colleagues I will:

- Encourage others to adopt and act in accordance with this Code, and take action in the presence of unethical behaviours.
- Build a spirit of collegiality through collaborative relationships based on trust, respect and honesty.
- Acknowledge and support the diverse strengths and experiences of colleagues in order to build shared professional knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Use constructive processes to address differences of opinion in order to negotiate shared perspectives and actions.
- Collaborate with my colleagues to participate in a ‘lively culture of professional inquiry’ to support continuous improvement.
In relation to the profession I will:

- Base my work on research, theories, content knowledge, practice evidence and my understanding of the children and families with whom I work.
- Take responsibility for articulating my professional values, knowledge, and practice and for the positive contribution our profession makes to society.
- Implement strategies that support and mentor colleagues to make positive contributions to the profession.
- Engage in critical reflection, ongoing professional learning and support research in order to build our professional knowledge base and practice.
- Work within the scope of my professional role and avoid misrepresentation of my professional competence and qualifications.
- Encourage qualities and practices of leadership within the profession.
- Welcome students as aspiring professionals, model quality practice and provide constructive feedback and assessment.

Definitions

In this Code of Ethics, these terms are given the following meanings:

- A Code of Ethics – defines the core aspirational values of the profession and provides guidance for what a professional ought to do when they encounter conflicting obligations or responsibilities in their work.
- Core Principles – deeply held beliefs that this profession values.
- Commitments – concepts that guide ethical decision making and actions.
- Families — the people who have significant care responsibilities for and/or kinship relationships with a child.
- Childhood Professional — a person who works with or on behalf of children and families in education and care settings.
- Communities — a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common.
- Colleagues — includes employers and those with whom you work directly or more broadly.
- Student — a person undertaking study at a secondary or tertiary institution.