

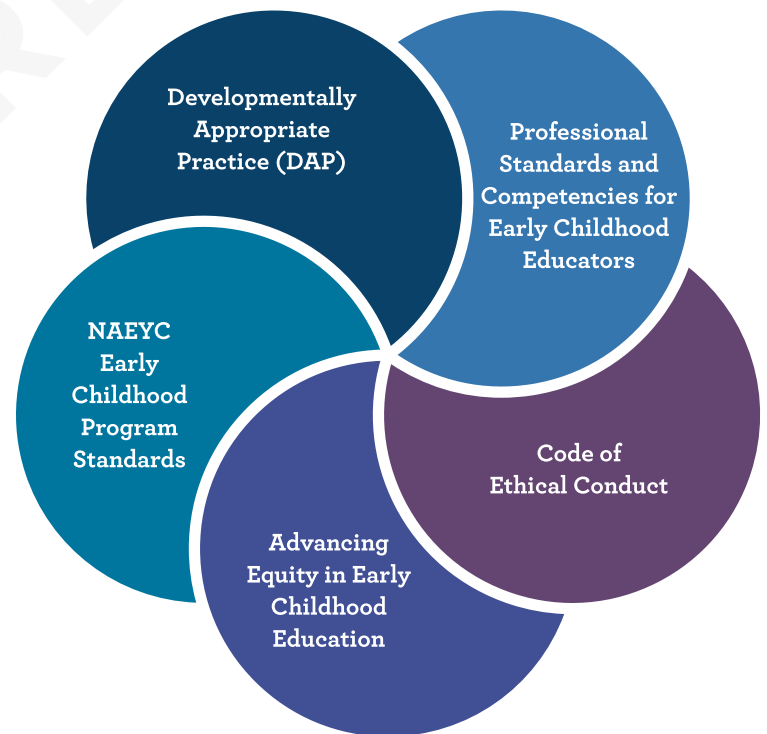
# Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators

## Relationship of Five Foundational Position Statements

This position statement is one of five foundational documents NAEYC has developed in collaboration with members of the early childhood education field. It articulates a professional code of ethics, and complements and supports the other foundational documents that (1) define developmentally appropriate practice (DAP); (2) set professional standards and competencies for early childhood educators; (3) outline standards for early learning programs; and (4) establish early childhood educators' professional obligation to advance equity. These foundational position statements are grounded in and responsive to [NAEYC's core values](#) that emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion and that respect the dignity and worth of each and every individual.

The ethical responsibilities of early childhood educators described in this statement work in concert with these values and the [Professional Standards and Competencies](#) to articulate the exemplary professional practices that effectively promote the development, learning, and well-being of all young children. They are anchored to the positions articulated in the [Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education](#) and [Developmentally Appropriate Practice \(DAP\)](#) statements which clarify that “all children have the right to equitable learning opportunities” that “fully support their optimal development and learning across all domains and content areas” and “enable them to achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society.” In addition, the ethical responsibilities outlined in this statement are further aligned with and reinforced by educators' decision-making described in the *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* and *Early Learning Program Standards* position statements.

### NAEYC's Foundational Documents



**Note for Public Comment on Draft:** Detailed, specific responses are most helpful. However, given that this is a draft document, please try to disregard mechanical or technical errors; all copyediting will be done by NAEYC staff after this public comment period, and prior to release of the final draft.

# Structure of the Code of Ethics

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This document outlines the purpose and position, as well as the core values that ground early childhood educators' professional relationships (1) with children, (2) with families, (3) among colleagues and employers, and (4) with community and society.

These core values inform a *Statement of Commitment* for individuals that is integrated into the *Code of Ethics* itself. The document then sets forth a framework of ethical responsibilities **for early childhood educators working with young children, families and other educators** in each of these four areas. The framework is then extended to address additional ethical responsibilities specific to **program**

## Purpose and Audience

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*The Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators presents the essential, professional ethical responsibilities of all early childhood educators. The embedded Statement of Commitment provides the opportunity for individuals who work in early childhood education to acknowledge and embrace the distinctive values and moral obligations an early childhood education professional has to young children, families, and other educators.*

Individuals who work in early childhood education face daily decisions that have moral and ethical dimensions. They must often make these decisions without needed supports and resources; in situations that may undermine, conflict with, or jeopardize educators' own personal beliefs, health, and well-being; and in the context of systems, structures, and financing mechanisms that are themselves inequitable, unjust, immoral, or unethical.

Change is necessary. Equitable learning opportunities for young children depend on the equitable and ethical treatment of early childhood educators, and society has moral and ethical obligations to early childhood educators that must be met. Like all people, early childhood educators also have and must recognize the ethical and moral obligations they have to themselves and their own well-being.

However, identifying the ethical obligations *others have to early childhood educators* and the obligations *educators have to themselves* is beyond the scope and purpose of this position statement, which specifically articulates the ethical obligations that *early childhood educators have to others, namely children, families, colleagues, community, and society.*

**administrators** and those working in **professional preparation programs**. These areas were previously addressed in supplemental documents.

Each section of the *Code* includes a brief introduction followed by a set of ethical responsibilities that first outline the practices that are positively required, then those that are permitted, and finally those that are prohibited. A glossary of terms is then included, followed by appendices that address the research, philosophy, and theoretical grounding for the Code of Ethics, along with the history and context, sources, and acknowledgements.

### Society Has Ethical Obligations to Early Childhood Educators

Among the ethical and moral obligations that families, employers, institutions of higher education, policymakers and the public have to early childhood educators is a responsibility to ensure that early childhood educators in all states and settings are able to be part of a diverse, equitable, effective, and recognized profession that is prepared, supported, and compensated for its essential, complex, and valuable work.

Some recommendations to help others fulfill these obligations can be found in the *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* and *Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education* position statements, as well as in the *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession*, which outline specific policies and actions needed to support educators as they strive to advance equity, practice ethical decision making, and implement developmentally appropriate practice in their work settings, through professional preparation and development, in public policy, and through continuing research.

In keeping with the definition of the early childhood education profession as outlined by the consensus *Unifying Framework for Early Childhood Educators*, this *Code* focuses on the ethical, professional responsibilities of early childhood educators working with children birth through age 8 across all settings, as well as program administrators and those providing professional preparation and supports; and it specifically focuses on the elements of practice over which the early childhood education workforce has a measure of autonomy and control.

All practitioners can look to the ethical, professional responsibilities outlined here for help in guiding conduct and resolving ethical dilemmas, including those which require the practitioner to combine the guidance of the *Code* with their professional judgment.

Individuals who choose to independently commit to the *Code*, and programs that choose to support awareness of and shared adherence to the *Code* by embracing its Statement of Commitment, contribute to the field's recognition of its own professionalism.

## A Starting Point for the Future

This *Code of Ethics* is a starting place in more ways than one. Additional resources have been and will be developed, including those designed to provide support to early childhood educators navigating ethical dilemmas when the best ethical course of action is not obvious—that is, when one important value contradicts another.

In addition, and in the future, members of the early childhood education profession who are licensed to practice, as outlined by the *Unifying Framework*, would be required to adhere to a *Code of Ethics*—like all members of any profession that is licensed to practice. Other professions have their own Codes of Ethics that guide their professional practice and conduct, and that ensure unethical actions have consequences, up to and including loss of a professional license. This *Code of Ethics* could one day serve, or be adapted to serve, that future purpose—protecting early childhood educators, families, and the public from harmful institutional or individual actors inside and outside of the profession.

# THE POSITION

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Early childhood educators must uphold essential professional, ethical responsibilities to ensure that each and every child, from birth through age 8, has equitable learning opportunities regardless of whether the setting is in a center, home, or school. The *Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators*, together with the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*, articulates these ethical responsibilities, and in so doing supports ethical behavior in early childhood educators' daily work.

## Core Values

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The following core values are rooted in history, reflective of the present, and responsive to the future. They ground early childhood educators' professional relationships and are organized in the same framework as the ethical responsibilities, so that practitioners know which values most closely undergird which responsibility.

The first set of values apply to all professional relationships:

- › Respect and support the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each and every individual
- › Respect and support diversity among individuals, as well as within and across groups of individuals, in terms of their backgrounds and lived experiences
- › Recognize that all individuals—children and adults—thrive within relationships based on trust and respect

With respect specifically to professional relationships with **children**, early childhood educators' core values include:

- › Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable part of the human life cycle
- › Base professional practice on current and accurate knowledge of how to understand and support children's development and learning
- › Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society

With respect specifically to professional relationships with **families**, early childhood educators' core values include:

- › Appreciate, value, and support the bond between the child and their family
- › Respect and support families in their task of nurturing children

With respect specifically to professional relationships between and among **colleagues and staff**, early childhood educators' core values include:

- › Be open to ideas and willing to learn
- › Recognize the importance of maintaining and contributing to a humane, supportive, and fulfilling work environment
- › Commit to the continuous professional learning and growth of self and staff
- › Draw upon research and knowledge from relevant disciplines, including adult development and learning

With respect specifically to professional relationships in the context of a broader **community and society**, early childhood educators' core values include:

- › Respect the critical role of a knowledgeable, competent, and diverse early childhood education and care workforce working across all settings
- › Serve as an advocate for children, their families, and their teachers in community and society

# Statement of Commitment

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This Statement of Commitment represents a personal acknowledgment of my willingness to embrace the core values and ethical responsibilities distinctive to early childhood educators.

**This commitment includes adherence to the tenet that has had precedence over all others in every iteration of the *Code of Ethics: above all, we shall not harm children*.** This means that we shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. Further, we recognize that while we have many ethical responsibilities and relationships, the safety and well-being of the children in our care is our primary responsibility, above our obligations to all other constituencies.

In my capacity as an individual working with young children, families, and/or other educators, I sign this statement to indicate my professional commitment to furthering the core values and ethical responsibilities of early childhood educators as reflected in this *Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators*, and in alignment with the *Professional Standards and Competencies*.

**PRINTED NAME:**

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**SIGNED NAME:**

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**NAME OF PROGRAM:**

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**LOCATION:**

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**DATE:**

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# Ethical responsibilities for early childhood educators working with young children, families and other educators

## 1. Ethical Responsibilities to Children

Our paramount responsibility is to provide education and care in diverse settings—including centers, homes, and schools—that are safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each and every child. We are committed to supporting each child’s development; fostering joyful learning; respecting individual differences; and helping children learn to play, live, and work in community. We are also committed to promoting children’s self-awareness, self-worth, physical and mental well-being, competence, and resiliency.

We shall:

**1.1**—Do no harm to children.

**1.2**—Care for and educate children in positive emotional, social, cultural, and learning environments that are developmentally appropriate, cognitively stimulating, and that affirm, support, value, and promote all aspects of each child’s identities and abilities.

**1.3**—Support children’s well-being by:

- a. encouraging the development of strong bonds and trusting relationships between and among children, families, educators, and communities.
- b. recognizing the multiple assets all young children bring to the early learning program as unique individuals and as members of families and communities.
- c. partnering with families and communities to promote those assets through cultural consistency, connections, and stability between the program and home.

**1.4**—Be aware of and apply all program policies regarding our obligations to children consistently, fairly, and without bias.

**1.5**—Use appropriate, and, to the extent possible, valid, unbiased, and reliable assessment systems, which include multiple sources of information, to understand and assess children’s learning, development, and program experiences.

**1.6**—Treat child assessment information confidentially and share this information only when there is a legitimate need for it.

**1.7**—Be familiar with the risk factors for, and signs of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse and physical, emotional, educational, and medical neglect.

- a. Be familiar with the ways in which reporting suspected abuse and neglect may be unjustly influenced by biases and stereotypes having a disproportionate impact on under-resourced communities, communities of color, and persons with disabilities.
- b. Follow state laws and community procedures (including reporting, informing, resource connections, community supports, and follow-up) that protect children against abuse and neglect when we have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or serious neglect.
- c. Assist in taking appropriate action or informing a parent and/or others who can act when another person shares a suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected

**1.8**—Strive to prevent, limit, and eliminate suspensions and expulsion of children in early childhood settings.

- a. Strive to build individual relationships with each child; make individualized adaptations and transition plans in teaching strategies, learning environments, and curricula; and consult with the family so that each child benefits from the program.
- b. Collaborate with the child’s family and appropriate specialists to determine the additional services needed and/or the placement option(s) most likely to ensure the child’s success if after such efforts have been exhausted, the current placement does not meet a child’s needs, or the child is seriously jeopardizing the ability of other children to benefit from the program (Aspects of this principle may not apply in programs that have a lawful mandate to provide services to a particular population of children).

**1.9**—Only utilize and integrate technology, interactive media, and artificial intelligence when it is done intentionally, responsibly, and within the framework of developmentally appropriate practice, and particularly to support learning goals established for individual children, strengthen family relationships, and provide equitable access for children with special needs.

**1.10**—Involve all those with relevant knowledge (including family members and staff) in decisions concerning a child, making every effort to use families’ preferred language while ensuring confidentiality of sensitive information.

**1.11**—Not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children.

**1.12**—Not base high-stakes decisions, such as those related to enrollment, retention, or assignment to special education services, on a single assessment, such as a test score or a single observation.

**1.13**—Not permit or participate in research that could hinder the education, development, or well-being of children.

**1.14**—Not participate in practices that discriminate against children by denying benefits, giving special advantages, or excluding them from programs or activities based on their abilities and identities (aspects of this principle do not apply in programs that have a lawful mandate to provide services to a particular population of children).

### **Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Early Childhood Education Communities**

Non-discrimination and inclusion principles throughout the Code of Ethics are designed to be consistently applied to children, families, and educators. With the exception of programs that intentionally serve specific age groups of children, and with the recognition that aspects of non-discrimination principles do not apply in programs that have a lawful mandate to provide services to particular populations, early childhood educators have ethical responsibilities not to participate in practices that discriminate against children, families, or other educators on the basis of race, national origin, age, immigration status, preferred home language, medical condition, disability, marital status, family structure, sexual orientation of family members/caregivers, sex, gender identity, gender expression, or religious beliefs, faith orientation, or other affiliations of their families.

## **2. Ethical Responsibilities to Families**

Families are the foundation of children’s development. As families and early childhood practitioners typically share a common interest in a child’s well-being, early childhood educators must recognize a primary responsibility to communicate, cooperate, and collaborate with each child’s home, family, and community in ways that enhance that child’s development and well-being.

We shall:

**2.1**—Partner with families to ensure that each family is involved in significant decisions affecting their child, and that family input contributes to the planning and implementation of the program and policies.

**2.2**—Work to create a respectful environment for and a working relationship with all families.

**2.3**—Make every effort to use two-way communication to effectively communicate with all families in their preferred language, calling upon external resources for translation and interpretation, which may include responsible use of artificial intelligence and interactive technology, when programs do not have sufficient internal resources.

**2.4**—Apply all policies regarding obligations to families consistently, fairly, and without bias.

**2.5**—Provide families with complete, honest, and non-biased information concerning the program’s enrollment practices, philosophy, policies, curriculum, assessment system, cultural practices, and personnel qualifications.

**2.6**—Positively respond to families’ requests to the extent that the requests are congruent with program philosophy, standards of good practice, and the resources of the program.

**2.7**—Interpret and communicate assessment information and results fairly, accurately, and in ways that convey the strengths of children as well as acknowledge the limitations of the evaluation instruments. Guarantee that assessment results are accessible to families.

**2.8**—Explain to families how data about their child will be used, maintain confidentiality, and respect the family’s right to privacy, except in the case where a child’s welfare is at risk, when it becomes permissible to share confidential information with agencies, organizations and/or individuals who have legal responsibilities to intervene in the child’s interest.

**2.9**—Ensure that parents and legal guardians have access to their child’s records and classroom or program setting, except in the case where access is denied by court order or other legal restriction.

**2.10**—Inform the family of injuries and incidents involving their child, of risks such as exposures to communicable diseases that might result in infection, and of occurrences that might result in emotional stress.

**2.11**—Strive to be familiar with community resources and support services; appropriately refer families as needed; and follow up to ensure that services have been provided appropriately and received.

**2.12**—Work proactively in cases where family members and/or staff are in conflict with one another and to help all parties involved express their particular needs and perspectives to make informed decisions and to support family members in doing the same.

**2.13**—Not involve children in research projects without fully informing parents or legal guardians, and providing them with the opportunity to give or withhold consent without penalty.

**2.14**—Not use our relationship with a family for private advantage or personal gain or enter into relationships with family members that might impair our judgement or have a negative impact on children.

**2.15**—Not honor any request from a family that puts a child in a situation that, in the context of professional expertise, knowledge, and judgement, would create physical or emotional harm. In such instances, we shall communicate with the family the reason(s) why the request was not honored and work toward an alternative solution.

### 3. Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues and Employers

A caring, cooperative workplace respects human dignity, promotes professional satisfaction, and supports and sustains positive relationships. Based upon our core values, our primary responsibilities to colleagues, including staff and volunteers, and employers are to establish and maintain inclusive environments and respectful relationships that support meaningful work as well as each individual's physical and mental well-being.

#### A—RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES

We shall:

**3A.1**—Recognize and honor the perspectives, strengths, and contributions of our colleagues to the program.

**3A.2**—Honor confidentiality related to job performance, and respect a right to privacy regarding personal and personnel issues.

**3A.3**—Exercise care by acknowledging and addressing personal biases in expressing views regarding personal attributes or professional conduct.

**3A.4**—Express concerns regarding colleagues' behavior, competence, fairness, ethics, or accuracy in a way that shows respect for personal dignity and diversity.

- a. As long as children's well-being is not at risk, we shall attempt to resolve the matter collegially and in a confidential manner.

- b. If children are at risk or the situation does not improve after it has been brought to the colleague's attention, we shall report the colleague's unethical or incompetent behavior through official channels and/or to an appropriate authority.

**3A.5**—Not participate in practices that discriminate against a colleague.

**3A.6**—Not participate in practices that diminish our colleagues' reputations or impair their effectiveness in working with children and families.

#### B—RESPONSIBILITIES TO EMPLOYERS

We shall:

**3B.1**—Follow all program policies. When we do not agree with program policies, we shall attempt to effect change through constructive action.

**3B.2**—Inform the program's administration or, when necessary, other appropriate authorities, when we have a concern about circumstances or conditions that impact the quality of education and care within the program.

**3B.3**—Speak or act on behalf of an organization only when authorized by that organization; and take care to acknowledge when we are speaking for the organization and when we are expressing a personal judgement.

**3B.4**—Be familiar with laws and regulations that serve to protect the health and safety of children in our programs and be vigilant in ensuring that these laws and regulations are followed.

**3B.5**—Not participate in practices that are in violation of laws and regulations designed to protect the health and safety of children in our programs, and in the case that we become aware of such violations, we shall take appropriate action consistent with this Code.

### 4. Ethical Responsibilities to Community and Society

Early childhood education programs operate within the context of their immediate community made up of families and other institutions concerned with children's well-being. Our responsibilities to the community are to provide programs that meet the diverse needs of families, to cooperate with agencies and professions that share the responsibility for children, to assist families in gaining access to those agencies and allied professionals, and to assist in the development and resourcing of community programs that are needed but not currently available.



As individuals, we acknowledge our responsibility to provide the best possible programs of education and care for children and to conduct ourselves with honesty and integrity.

Because of our specialized expertise in early childhood development and education and because the larger society shares responsibility for the welfare and protection of young children, we acknowledge a collective obligation to advocate for children within early childhood programs and in the larger community and to serve as a voice alongside young children and families.

We shall:

**4.1**—Communicate openly and truthfully about the nature and extent of services that we provide and be objective and accurate in reporting the knowledge upon which we base our program practices to those served, the public, and with relevant oversight bodies.

**4.2**—Rely on our professional perspectives, relevant experience, knowledge of child development, and standards of practice to provide informed opinions on issues, practices, products, or programs.

**4.3**—Ensure that any research we conduct appropriately reflects the diversity of the population upon whom its results may have future impact.

**4.4**—Exercise caution particularly when recommending commercial products or services.

**4.5**—Inform ourselves about the systems, policies, and practices that contribute to inequitable and unethical outcomes for children, and work to change them.

**4.6**—Hire or recommend for employment persons whose competence, qualifications, and character make them well-suited for the position.

**4.7**—Make a case-by-case determination of whether to report problems and disclose program identities to appropriate authorities or the public. These determinations must be based on a fair assessment of the evidence which concludes that a program or agency that enacts policies or provides services intended to protect children’s health and safety or ensure children’s well-being, is requiring employees to violate this Code or failing to meet its obligations. If a fair assessment determines that a public report is not necessary, this decision should not put children at risk.

**4.8**—Not mislead families or the public by offering services that we do not have the competence, qualifications, or resources to provide.

## Ethical responsibilities specific to program administrators

Administrators of programs for young children, including those operating, owning, or working in family child care settings, have a wide diversity of pedagogical and operational responsibilities. Program administrators face unique responsibilities and ethical challenges in the course of managing and guiding their programs and assume leadership roles within and beyond their programs. Administrators may be responsible for providing pedagogical leadership, managing program operations, and representing the field to the community.

As managers and leaders, they are called upon to build and sustain relationships with a wide variety of constituencies; share their professional knowledge and expertise with families, personnel, governing boards, and others; demonstrate empathy for the families and children they serve; and communicate respect for the skills, knowledge, and expertise of teaching staff, other personnel, and families.

Programs providing early education and care operate under various public and private auspices with diverse governing structures, funding streams, missions, and levels and mechanisms of oversight and accountability. Administrators must be responsive to these various structures, while ensuring the program's stability and reputation through licensing, participation in quality rating systems, and accreditation; recruiting, selecting, orienting, and supervising personnel; maintaining a safe and secure facility or home where children and staff can thrive; and following sound fiscal practices.

Administrators accept primary responsibility for executing the program's mission as well as developing and carrying out program policies and procedures that support that mission. They also make a commitment to continue their own professional development and to support the continuing education of the personnel in the program they lead. Administrators may also support educators and staff in being advocates for all children, and may participate in their own advocacy capacity in helping children and families gain equitable access to high-quality, inclusive early learning environments.

Given the nature and complexity of their responsibilities, administrators often face additional ethical challenges, particularly when conflicts surface in the areas of enrollment policies; dealings with personnel; and competing obligations to families, licensing and monitoring agencies, governing boards, sponsoring and fiscal agencies, and others in the community.

The next section examines Administrators' ethical responsibilities to coworkers and employers that are included in the Code of Ethical Conduct, Section III, Part A and Part B and offers additional sets of ethical responsibilities unique to early childhood program administrators, specifically addressing two areas of their professional relationships: (a) with personnel they supervise and/or employ, and (b) with sponsoring agencies and governing boards.

### ADMIN 1: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO PERSONNEL

We shall:

**Admin 1.1**—Provide staff members with safe and supportive working conditions, environments, and facilities that respect human dignity and diversity, honor confidences, value well-being, encourage professional growth, and facilitate ethical decision-making.

**Admin 1.2**—Make every effort to seek out and provide resources that ensure that all children, including those with special needs, can benefit from the program.

**Admin 1.3**—Support and encourage personnel in their efforts to implement strengths-based programming that enhances children's positive and joyful learning and development.

**Admin 1.4**—Work to achieve shared understandings between families and staff members. In the case of disagreements, we shall help all parties express their particular needs and perspectives.

**Admin 1.5**—Seek out, value, and draw upon different kinds of education, training, professional experience, lived experience, and expertise held by personnel, when making decisions concerning children and programs.

**Admin 1.6**—Provide access to continuing professional development and advancement, and work to ensure that it reflects current research and is relevant to staff members' responsibilities.

**Admin 1.7**—Provide training for and hold program staff accountable for knowing and following all relevant standards and regulations.

**Admin 1.8**—Develop and maintain written policies for the protection of confidentiality and the disclosure of children's records, which shall be made available to all program personnel and families.

- a. Disclosure of children's records beyond parents or legal guardians, program personnel, and consultants having an obligation of confidentiality shall require familial consent (except in cases of suspected abuse or neglect).

**Admin 1.9**—Develop and maintain comprehensive and clearly stated, written personnel policies that define program standards and expectations, are given to all new staff members, and are easily accessible and available for review by all staff members.

**Admin 1.10**—Apply all policies regarding work with personnel consistently, fairly, and without bias.

**Admin 1.11**—Appropriately address incidents that are not consistent with our policies.

**Admin 1.12**— Be familiar with and observe laws and regulations that pertain to employment discrimination, and make hiring, retention, termination, and promotion decisions based solely on a person’s competence, professional preparation, record of accomplishment, and ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position.

**Admin 1.13**—Be familiar with and abide by the rules and regulations developed by unions or other groups representing the interests or rights of personnel.

**Admin 1.14**—Evaluate the performance of all staff.

- a. Inform staff whose performance does not meet program expectations about areas of concern and, when possible, assist them in improving their performance by providing additional supports and coaching.
- b. Inform staff about grievance procedures if they do not agree with their performance evaluation.

**Admin 1.15**—Conduct personnel dismissals, when necessary, in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

- a. Inform staff who are dismissed of the reasons for termination.
- b. When dismissal is for cause, ensure there is evidence of inadequate or inappropriate behavior that is current, accurately documented, and available for review.

**Admin 1.16**—Be accurate and truthful in making personnel evaluations, judgements, and references.

**Admin 1.17**—Not make hiring, retention, termination, and promotion decisions based on an individual’s identities.

**Admin 1.18**—Not allow staff to implement activities or practices that put any child in a situation that creates physical or emotional harm.

## **ADMIN 2: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO SPONSORING AGENCIES AND GOVERNING BODIES**

We shall:

**Admin 2.1**—Review all program policies set forth by sponsoring agencies and governing bodies to ensure that they are in the best interest of the children.

**Admin 2.2**—Comply with all relevant regulations and standards that support quality care and education for young children and families.

**Admin 2.3**—Do our jobs conscientiously, attending to all areas that fall within the scope of our responsibilities.

**Admin 2.4**—Manage resources responsibly and accurately account for their use.

**Admin 2.5**—Evaluate our programs using agreed-upon standards and report our findings to the appropriate authority.

**Admin 2.6**—Thoroughly and honestly communicate necessary information, while making every effort to preserve confidentiality in the absence of a compelling reason.

**Admin 2.7**—Express our professional concerns about directives from the sponsoring agency or governing body when we believe that a mandated practice is not in the best interest of children.

## Ethical responsibilities specific to adult educators in professional preparation programs

Adult educators working in professional preparation and training programs maintain a primary responsibility to the development of knowledge, skill, and dispositions in adult learners, which furthers their ultimate commitment to the well-being, learning, and development of young children. Their work includes related and intertwined obligations to support and nurture adult learners and to provide caring and competent professionals to work with young children and their families.

As to the obligation to help develop caring and competent professionals, those facilitating educator preparation and professional development must look to the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*, which presents the essential body of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices required of all early childhood educators working with children from birth through age 8, across all early learning settings. Likewise, the *Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education* position statement lays out eight key recommendations focused on preparing current and prospective early childhood educators to provide equitable learning opportunities for all children.

With these supports, and as they fulfill their day-to-day responsibilities focused primarily on the professional preparation and development of adult learners, teacher educators and professional development specialists encounter some unique ethical challenges in the context of a complex network of relationships, including those with sites providing practicum experiences, employing institutions of higher education, and agencies that provide professional development. These entities, agencies, and institutions also have ethical obligations to early childhood education students, teachers, and faculty members, but again, those obligations are beyond the scope of this Code of Ethics.

Therefore, this section is designed specifically to set forth a conception of early childhood teacher educators' professional, ethical responsibilities in the context of three relationships with:

- a. adult learners;
- b. sites providing practicum experiences, and
- c. institutions of higher learning, and agencies that provide professional learning opportunities.

Although this section is rooted in the ethical responsibilities and recurring ethical dilemmas that early childhood teacher educators face in associate and baccalaureate and graduate degree-granting institutions, many of its provisions are equally applicable to early childhood educators who provide access to credentials, nondegree professional learning opportunities, and mentoring to adults in early childhood education and care settings.

### PREP 1: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO ADULT LEARNERS IN TRAINING CLASSES AND HIGHER EDUCATION COURSES

We shall:

**Prep 1.1**—Provide learning experiences that are consistent with the best practices for adult learners and that are responsive to the strengths, needs, learning styles, cultures, languages, practice settings, and stages of development of adult learners at all points in their educational journey.

**Prep 1.2**—Provide sound educational experiences for adult learners that enable them to understand and nurture the optimal development of children, communicate with and provide support for families, and attend to their own health and well-being.

**Prep 1.3**—Inform learners of conduct and work expectations, including institutional standards for writing, performance, and academic integrity, including the responsible use and integration of artificial intelligence.

**Prep 1.4**—Honor confidentiality, sharing only necessary information about an adult learner, only to those who need to know, and only through appropriate professional channels.

**Prep 1.5**—Build into all required training minimum required levels of demonstration of understanding and competence, and give all learners equitable pathways to succeed, demonstrate competence, and perform at high levels.

**Prep 1.6**—As applicable, ensure adult learners have in-person and, where necessary, virtual access to practicum settings, including centers, schools, and family child care homes, where staff are qualified to work with young children, where mentors can successfully support adult learners, and which to the greatest extent possible reflect the diverse communities in which adult learners will be working.

**Prep 1.7**—Provide and recommend the use of institutional and additional support for adult learners, including but not limited to dual language learners and multilingual adult learners, who have the potential to work effectively with young

children but have difficulty meeting academic standards, as well as those who demonstrate academic excellence but experience difficulty working with young children in practice.

**Prep 1.8**—Help adult learners identify alternative educational paths and goals when after we have made concerted efforts to work with the adult learners, it becomes apparent that they are not able to benefit from our training, class, or program.

**Prep 1.9**—Support adult learners who come to us with concerns about a colleague’s competence, fairness, ethics, or accuracy by helping them clarify their concerns, and deciding and following through on a course of action to address the problem.

**Prep 1.10**—Not sell products and/or services from which we stand to gain financially in professional development unless they are relevant, serve educational goals, and we have explicitly stated this connection at the outset of the training.

**Prep 1.11**—Not allow adult learners to pass a course or move to the next level of professional credentialing if they have not demonstrated expected levels of knowledge and competence in course or training content or if they do not demonstrate the ability to relate positively and effectively with children and families.

**Prep 1.12**—Not allow adult learners to complete a program if we have direct evidence that they may cause harm by endangering children’s physical, emotional, or psychological well-being.

## **PREP 2: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO PRACTICUM SITES**

We shall:

**Prep 2.1**—Clearly state all parties’ roles and responsibilities and prepare adult learners, mentors, and administrators for practicum experiences.

**Prep 2.2**—Recognize and respect the reciprocal relationship between the early childhood program and the institution of higher education, and work to be a partner in addressing needs and providing appropriate support for all parties’ efforts to fulfill their roles and meet program expectations.

**Prep 2.3**—Ensure that qualified personnel conduct regular supervision of practicum experiences in order to support professional development of adult learners and monitor the welfare of children.

**Prep 2.4**—Honor confidentiality, guard the privacy of the programs, its teachers, families, and children—including on all social media platforms—and instill in adult learners a professional obligation to do the same.

**Prep 2.5**—Make every effort to move adult learners to more appropriate placements in the event that a practicum placement is not supporting adult learners’ professional development or is not beneficial to the student or children.

## **PREP 3: ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS TO INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING AND AGENCIES PROVIDING TRAINING**

We shall:

**Prep 3.1**— Offer professional learning and instruction only in areas in which we have or can obtain appropriate experience and expertise.

**Prep 3.2**—Ensure that relevant course and training content is aligned to the *Professional Standards and Competencies*.

**Prep 3.3**—Respect the integrity of courses by following approved course descriptions and updating content based on up-to-date research.

**Prep 3.4**—Evaluate adult learners fairly and without bias, using those standards that are congruent with the mission of our institution and regarded as accepted practice in the field.

**Prep 3.5**—Keep roles separate when our involvement with an adult learner involves more than one role (e.g., instructor, employer, supervisor), and provide decisions, recommendations, and give feedback appropriate to the different contexts.

# Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

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NAEYC reviews common terms used on a periodical basis and updates guidance as needed. This list of terms was adapted from existing position statements, including the current Code of Ethics, DAP, and Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education position statements. We specifically welcome feedback on included terminology and language, along with feedback on the rest of the draft statement.

**Ability:** The means or skills to do something. In this position statement, we use the term “ability” more broadly than the traditional focus on cognition or psychometric properties to apply across all domains of development. We focus and build on each child’s abilities, strengths, and interests, acknowledging disabilities and developmental delays while avoiding ableism.

**Adult Learners:** Adult learners, both preservice and in-service, who work in or are preparing to work in settings that provide education and care for young children from birth through 8 years of age. In the context of this position statement, adult learners can include high school and college students under 18 years of age who meet the definition of “working in” or “preparing to work in” settings that provide education and care for young children birth through age 8.

**Administrator:** An individual responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating an early childhood education program, for infants and toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarteners, or children in primary grades. The administrator’s setting may vary, and may include a child care center, family child care home, or school. The administrator’s title may vary, depending on the program type or sponsorship of the program. Common titles include director, family child care owner or operator, site manager, administrator, program manager, early childhood coordinator, and principal.

**Bias:** Attitudes or stereotypes that favor one group over another. Explicit biases are conscious beliefs and stereotypes that affect one’s understanding, actions, and decisions; implicit biases also affect one’s understanding, actions, and decisions but in an unconscious manner. Implicit biases reflect an individual’s socialization and experiences within broader systemic structures that work to perpetuate existing systems of privilege and oppression. An anti-bias approach to education explicitly works to end all forms of bias and discrimination.

**Colleague:** A fellow early childhood educator, administrator, or adult educator, including co-workers and volunteers, who may or may not be employed by one’s own program or institution.

**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 core values of a profession.

**Early Childhood Adult Educator:** A professional who teaches early childhood educators in an institution of higher education (includes adjunct faculty) and those who conduct not-for-credit training for the early education and care workforce.

**Ethical Dilemma:** A moral conflict that involves determining appropriate conduct when an individual faces conflicting professional values and responsibilities.

**Ethical Responsibilities:** Behaviors that one must or must not engage in. Ethical responsibilities are clear-cut and are spelled out in the Code of Ethical Conduct (for example, early childhood educators should never share confidential information about a child or family with a person who has no legitimate need for knowing).

**Ethics:** The study of right and wrong, or duty and obligation, that involves critical reflection on morality and the ability to make choices between values and the examination of the moral dimensions of relationships.

**Equity:** The state that would be achieved if individuals fared the same way in society regardless of race, gender, class, language, disability, or any other social or cultural characteristic. In practice, equity means all children and families receive necessary supports in a timely fashion so they can develop their full intellectual, social, and physical potential.

**Equitable learning opportunities:** Learning opportunities that not only help each child thrive by building on each one's unique set of individual and family strengths—including cultural background, language(s), abilities and disabilities, and experiences—but also are designed to eliminate differences in outcomes that are a result of past and present inequities in society.

**Family:** While early childhood educators and administrators have specific obligations to parents and legal guardians outlined in the Code, a child's family is defined broadly for the purposes of this Code to include any combination of two or more persons who are bound together over time by ties of mutual consent, birth, and/or adoption or placement, and who, together, assume some key responsibilities for the raising and nurturing of children.

**Gender identity and expression:** A social concept that reflects how individuals identify themselves. Traditionally viewed as a binary category of male/female linked to an individual's sex, gender identity and expression can be viewed by current science as fluid and expansive. Cisgender individuals develop a gender identity that matches their legal designation. Transgender individuals are those whose gender identity and/or expression differs from cultural expectations based on their legal designation at birth.

**Inclusion:** Embodied by the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and their family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to help them reach their full potential.

**Mentor:** An experienced early childhood professional who may work adult learners in an early childhood program and who provides guidance and counsel.

**Morality:** Peoples' views of what is good, right, and proper; their beliefs about their obligations; and their ideas about how they should behave.

**Professional Ethics:** The moral commitments of a profession that involve moral reflection that extends and enhances the personal morality practitioners bring to their work, that concern actions of right and wrong in the workplace, and that help individuals re-solve moral dilemmas they encounter in their work.

**Values:** Qualities or principles that individuals believe to be desirable or worthwhile and that they prize for themselves, for others, and for the world in which they live.

These appendices will be updated for the final Code of Ethics position statement; in this draft, the Governing Board and Workgroup are seeking comments from the field that are focused on the core content of the Code of Ethics.

**Appendix B: Theoretical and Philosophical Grounding and Considerations**

**Appendix C: History and Context**

**Appendix D: Sources**

**Appendix E: Acknowledgements and Workgroup**

DRAFT REVISION