

## **Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment**

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

Revised April 2005

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 <http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/ethics04.asp>.)

### ***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

- \* Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- \* Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- \* Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- \* Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society
- \* Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- \* Respect diversity 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

## ***Conceptual Framework***

The Code sets forth a framework of professional responsibilities in four sections. Each section addresses an area of professional relationships: (1) with children, (2) with families, (3) among colleagues, and (4) with the community and society. Each section includes an introduction to the primary responsibilities of the early childhood practitioner in that context. The introduction is followed by a set of ideals (I) that reflect exemplary professional practice and a set of principles (P) describing practices that are required, prohibited, or permitted.

The ideals reflect the aspirations of practitioners. The principles guide conduct and assist practitioners in resolving ethical dilemmas.<sup>2</sup> Both ideals and principles are intended to direct practitioners to those questions which, when responsibly answered, can provide the basis for conscientious decision making. While the Code provides specific direction for addressing some ethical dilemmas, many others will require the practitioner to combine the guidance of the Code with professional judgment.

The ideals and principles in this Code present a shared framework of professional responsibility that affirms our commitment to the core values of our field. The Code publicly acknowledges the responsibilities that we in the field have assumed and in so doing supports ethical behavior in our work. Practitioners who face situations with ethical dimensions are urged to seek guidance in the applicable parts of this Code and in the spirit that informs the whole.

Often, "the right answer"-the best ethical course of action to take-is not obvious. There may be no readily apparent, positive way to handle a situation. When one important value contradicts another, we face an ethical dilemma. When we face a dilemma, it is our professional responsibility to consult the Code and all relevant parties to find the most ethical resolution.

### ***Section I: Ethical responsibilities to children***

Childhood is a unique and valuable stage in the human life cycle. Our paramount responsibility is to provide care and education in settings that are safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each child. We are committed to supporting children's development and learning; respecting individual differences; and helping children learn to live, play, and work cooperatively. We are also committed to promoting children's self-awareness, competence, self-worth, resiliency, 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 training.

I-1.2-To base program practices upon current knowledge and research in the field of early childhood education, child development, and related disciplines, as well as on particular knowledge of each child.

I-1.3-To recognize and respect the unique qualities, abilities, and potential of each child.

I-1.4-To appreciate the vulnerability 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 use assessment instruments and strategies that are appropriate for the children to be assessed, that are used only for the purposes for which they were designed, and that have the potential to benefit children.

I-1.7-To use assessment information to understand and support children's development and learning, to support instruction, and to identify children who may need additional services.

I-1.8-To support the right of each child to play and 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 support 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 experiences in a language that they know, as well as support 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 as children and families move from one program to the next.

### *Principles*

P-1.1-Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. This principle has precedence over all others in this Code.

P-1.2-We shall care for and educate children in positive emotional and social environments that are cognitively stimulating and that support each child's culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure.

P-1.3-We shall not participate in practices that discriminate against children by denying benefits, giving special advantages, or excluding them from programs or activities on the basis of their sex, race, national origin, religious beliefs, medical condition, disability, or the marital status/family structure, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs or other affiliations of their families. (Aspects of this principle do not apply in programs that have a lawful mandate to provide services to a particular population of children.)

P-1.4-We shall involve all those with relevant knowledge (including families and staff) in decisions concerning a child, as appropriate, ensuring confidentiality of sensitive information.

P-1.5-We shall use appropriate assessment systems, which include multiple sources of information, to provide information on children's learning and development.

P-1.6-We shall strive to ensure that decisions such as those related to enrollment, retention, or assignment to special education services, will be based on multiple sources of information and will never be based on a single assessment, such as a test score or a single observation.

P-1.7-We shall strive to build individual relationships with each child; make individualized adaptations in teaching strategies, learning environments, and curricula; and consult with the family so that each child benefits from the program. 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, we shall 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. (Aspects of this principle may not apply in programs that have a lawful mandate to provide services to a particular population of children.)

P-1.8-We shall be familiar with the risk factors for and symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse and physical, emotional, educational, and medical neglect. We shall know and follow state laws and community procedures that protect children against abuse and neglect.

P-1.9-When we have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, we shall report it to the appropriate community agency and follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken. When appropriate, parents or guardians will be informed that the referral will be or has been made.

P-1.10-When another person tells us of his or her suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected, we shall assist that person in taking appropriate action in order to protect the child.

P-1.11-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 parents and/or others who can.

### ***Section II: Ethical responsibilities to families***

Families<sup>3</sup> are of primary importance in children's development. Because the family and the early childhood practitioner have a common interest in the child's well-being, we acknowledge a primary responsibility to bring about communication, cooperation, and collaboration between the home and early childhood program in ways that enhance the child's development.

#### *Ideals*

I-2.1-To be familiar with the knowledge base related to working effectively with families and to stay informed through continuing education and training.

I-2.2-To develop relationships of mutual trust and create partnerships with the families we serve.

I-2.3-To welcome all family members and encourage them to participate in the program.

I-2.4-To listen to families, acknowledge and build upon their strengths and competencies, and learn from families as we support them in their task of nurturing children.

I-2.5-To respect the dignity and preferences of each family and to make an effort to learn about its structure, culture, language, customs, and beliefs.

I-2.6-To acknowledge families' childrearing values and their right to make decisions for their children.

I-2.7-To share information about each child's education and development with families and to help them understand and appreciate the current knowledge base of the early childhood profession.

I-2.8-To help family members enhance their understanding of their children and support the continuing development of their skills as parents.

I-2.9-To participate in building support networks for families by providing them with opportunities to interact with program staff, other families, community resources, and professional services.

*Principles*

P-2.1-We shall not deny family members access to their child's classroom or program setting unless access is denied by court order or other legal restriction.

P-2.2-We shall inform families of program philosophy, policies, curriculum, assessment system, and personnel qualifications, and explain why we teach as we do-which should be in accordance with our ethical responsibilities to children (see Section I).

P-2.3-We shall inform families of and, when appropriate, involve them in policy decisions.

P-2.4-We shall involve the family in significant decisions affecting their child.

P-2.5-We shall make every effort to communicate effectively with all families in a language that they understand. We shall use community resources for translation and interpretation when we do not have sufficient resources in our own programs.

P-2.6-As families share information with us about their children and families, we shall consider this information to plan and implement the program.

P-2.7-We shall inform families about the nature and purpose of the program's child assessments and how data about their child will be used.

P-2.8-We shall treat child assessment information confidentially and share this information only when there is a legitimate need for it.

P-2.9-We shall 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.

P-2.10-Families shall be fully informed of any proposed research projects involving their children and shall have the opportunity to give or withhold consent without penalty. We shall not permit or participate in research that could in any way hinder the education, development, or well-being of children.

P-2.11-We shall not engage in or support exploitation of families. We shall not use our relationship with a family for private advantage or personal gain, or enter into relationships with family members that might impair our effectiveness working with their children.

P-2.12-We shall develop written policies for the protection of confidentiality and the disclosure of children's records. These policy documents shall be made available to all program personnel and families. Disclosure of children's records beyond family members, program personnel, and consultants having an obligation of confidentiality shall require familial consent (except in cases of abuse or neglect).

P-2.13-We shall maintain confidentiality and shall respect the family's right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life. However, when we have reason to believe that a child's welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies, as well as with individuals who have legal responsibility for intervening in the child's interest.

P-2.14-In cases where family members are in conflict with one another, we shall work openly, sharing our observations of the child, to help all parties involved make informed decisions. We shall refrain from becoming an advocate for one party.

P-2.15-We shall be familiar with and appropriately refer families to community resources and professional support services. After a referral has been made, we shall follow up to ensure that services have been appropriately provided.

### ***Section III: Ethical responsibilities to colleagues***

In a caring, cooperative workplace, human dignity is respected, professional satisfaction is promoted, and positive relationships are developed and sustained. Based upon our core values, our primary responsibility to colleagues is to establish and maintain settings and relationships that support productive work and meet professional needs. The same ideals that apply to children also apply as we interact with adults in the workplace.

#### A-Responsibilities to co-workers

##### *Ideals*

I-3A.1-To establish and maintain relationships of respect, trust, confidentiality, collaboration, and cooperation with co-workers.

I-3A.2-To share resources with co-workers, collaborating to ensure that the best possible early childhood care and education program is provided.

I-3A.3-To support co-workers in meeting their professional needs and in their professional development.

I-3A.4-To accord co-workers due recognition of professional achievement.

### *Principles*

P-3A.1-We shall recognize the contributions of colleagues to our program and not participate in practices that diminish their reputations or impair their effectiveness in working with children and families.

P-3A.2-When we have concerns about the professional behavior of a co-worker, we shall first let that person know of our concern in a way that shows respect for personal dignity and for the diversity to be found among staff members, and then attempt to resolve the matter collegially and in a confidential manner.

P-3A.3-We shall exercise care in expressing views regarding the personal attributes or professional conduct of co-workers. Statements should be based on firsthand knowledge, not hearsay, and relevant to the interests of children and programs.

P-3A.4-We shall not participate in practices that discriminate against a co-worker because of sex, race, national origin, religious beliefs or other affiliations, age, marital status/family structure, disability, or sexual orientation.

### B-Responsibilities to employers

#### *Ideals*

I-3B.1-To assist the program in providing the highest quality of service.

I-3B.2-To do nothing that diminishes the reputation of the program in which we work unless it is violating laws and regulations designed to protect children or is violating the provisions of this Code.

#### *Principles*

P-3B.1 - We shall follow all program policies. When we do not agree with program policies, we shall attempt to effect change through constructive action within the organization.

P-3B.2-We shall speak or act on behalf of an organization only when authorized. We shall take care to acknowledge when we are speaking for the organization and when we are expressing a personal judgment.

P-3B.3-We shall not violate laws or regulations designed to protect children and shall take appropriate action consistent with this Code when aware of such violations.

P-3B.4-If we have concerns about a colleague's behavior, and children's well-being is not at risk, we may address the concern with that individual. 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 to an appropriate authority.

P-3B.5-When we have a concern about circumstances or conditions that impact the quality of care and education within the program, we shall inform the program's administration or, when necessary, other appropriate authorities.

### C-Responsibilities to employees

#### *Ideals*

I-3C.1-To promote safe and healthy working conditions and policies that foster mutual respect, cooperation, collaboration, competence, well-being, confidentiality, and self-esteem in staff members.

I-3C.2-To create and maintain a climate of trust and candor that will enable staff to speak and act in the best interests of children, families, and the field of early childhood care and education.

I-3C.3-To strive to secure adequate and equitable compensation (salary and benefits) for those who work with or on behalf of young children.

I-3C.4-To encourage and support continual development of employees in becoming more skilled and knowledgeable practitioners.

#### *Principles*

P-3C.1-In decisions concerning children and programs, we shall draw upon the education, training, experience, and expertise of staff members.

P-3C.2-We shall provide staff members with safe and supportive working conditions that honor confidences and permit them to carry out their responsibilities through fair performance evaluation, written grievance procedures, constructive feedback, and opportunities for continuing professional development and advancement.

P-3C.3-We shall develop and maintain comprehensive written personnel policies that define program standards. These policies shall be given to new staff members and shall be available and easily accessible for review by all staff members.

P-3C.4-We shall inform employees whose performance does not meet program expectations of areas of concern and, when possible, assist in improving their performance.

P-3C.5-We shall conduct employee dismissals for just cause, in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. We shall inform employees who are dismissed of the reasons for their termination. When a dismissal is for cause, justification must be based on evidence of inadequate or inappropriate behavior that is accurately documented, current, and available for the employee to review.

P-3C.6-In making evaluations and recommendations, we shall make judgments based on fact and relevant to the interests of children and programs.

P-3C.7-We shall make hiring, retention, termination, and promotion decisions based solely on a person's competence, record of accomplishment, ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position, and professional preparation specific to the developmental levels of children in his/her care.

P-3C.8-We shall not make hiring, retention, termination, and promotion decisions based on an individual's sex, race, national origin, religious beliefs or other affiliations, age, marital status/family structure, disability, or sexual orientation. We shall be familiar with and observe laws and regulations that pertain to employment discrimination. (Aspects of this principle do not apply to programs that have a lawful mandate to determine eligibility based on one or more of the criteria identified above.)

P-3C.9-We shall maintain confidentiality in dealing with issues related to an employee's job performance and shall respect an employee's right to privacy regarding personal issues.

#### ***Section IV: Ethical responsibilities to community and society***

Early childhood programs operate within the context of their immediate community made up of families and other institutions concerned with children's welfare. 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 of community programs that are needed but not currently available.

As individuals, we acknowledge our responsibility to provide the best possible programs of care and education 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 the best interests of

children within early childhood programs and in the larger community and to serve as a voice for young children everywhere.

The ideals and principles in this section are presented to distinguish between those that pertain to the work of the individual early childhood educator and those that more typically are engaged in collectively on behalf of the best interests of children-with the understanding that individual early childhood educators have a shared responsibility for addressing the ideals and principles that are identified as "collective."

*Ideals (Individual)*

1-4.1-To provide the community with high-quality early childhood care and education programs and services.

*Ideals (Collective)*

I-4.2-To promote cooperation among professionals and agencies and interdisciplinary collaboration among professions concerned with addressing issues in the health, education, and well-being of young children, their families, and their early childhood educators.

I-4.3-To work through education, research, and advocacy toward an environmentally safe world in which all children receive health care, food, and shelter; are nurtured; and live free from violence in their home and their communities.

I-4.4-To work through education, research, and advocacy toward a society in which all young children have access to high-quality early care and education programs.

I-4.5-To work to ensure that appropriate assessment systems, which include multiple sources of information, are used for purposes that benefit children.

I-4.6-To promote knowledge and understanding of young children and their needs. To work toward greater societal acknowledgment of children's rights and greater social acceptance of responsibility for the well-being of all children.

I-4.7-To support policies and laws that promote the well-being of children and families, and to work to change those that impair their well-being. To participate in developing policies and laws that are needed, and to cooperate with other individuals and groups in these efforts.

I-4.8-To further the professional development of the field of early childhood care and education and to strengthen its commitment to realizing its core values as reflected in this Code.

*Principles (Individual)*

P-4.1-We shall communicate openly and truthfully about the nature and extent of services that we provide.

P-4.2-We shall apply for, accept, and work in positions for which we are personally well-suited and professionally qualified. We shall not offer services that we do not have the competence, qualifications, or resources to provide.

P-4.3-We shall carefully check references and shall not hire or recommend for employment any person whose competence, qualifications, or character makes him or her unsuited for the position.

P-4.4-We shall be objective and accurate in reporting the knowledge upon which we base our program practices.

P-4.5-We shall be knowledgeable about the appropriate use of assessment strategies and instruments and interpret results accurately to families.

P-4.6-We shall be familiar with laws and regulations that serve to protect the children in our programs and be vigilant in ensuring that these 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 parents and/or others who can.

P-4.8-We shall not participate in practices that are in violation of laws and regulations that protect the children in our programs.

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 appropriate authorities who can be expected to remedy the situation.

P-4.10-When a program violates or requires its employees to violate this Code, it is permissible, after fair assessment of the evidence, to disclose the identity of that program.

*Principles (Collective)*

P-4.11-When policies are enacted for purposes that do not benefit children, we have a collective responsibility to work to change these practices.

P-4.12-When we have evidence that an agency that provides services intended to ensure children's well-being is failing to meet its obligations, we acknowledge a

collective ethical responsibility to report the problem to appropriate authorities or to the public. We shall be vigilant in our follow-up until the situation is resolved.

P-4.13-When a child protection agency fails to provide adequate protection for abused or neglected children, we acknowledge a collective ethical responsibility to work toward the improvement of these services.

### ***Glossary of Terms Related to Ethics***

Code of Ethics - Defines the core values of the field and provides guidance for what professionals should do when they encounter conflicting obligations or responsibilities 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.

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.

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

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.

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 resolve moral dilemmas they encounter in their work.

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).

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

### ***Sources for Glossary Terms and Definitions***

Feeney, S., & N. Freeman. 1999. Ethics and the early childhood educator: Using the NAEYC code. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Kidder, R.M. 1995. How good people make tough choices: Resolving the dilemmas of ethical living. New York: Fireside.

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The National Association for the Education of Young Children ("NAEYC") is a nonprofit corporation, tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, dedicated to acting on behalf of the needs and interests of young children. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct ("Code") has been developed in furtherance of NAEYC's nonprofit and tax exempt purposes. The information contained in the Code is intended to provide early childhood educators with guidelines for working with children from birth through age 8. Use, reference to, or review of the Code does not guarantee compliance with NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Performance Criteria and program accreditation procedures. It is recommended that the Code be used as guidance in connection with implementation of the NAEYC Program Standards, but such use is not a substitute for diligent review and application of the NAEYC Program Standards.

NAEYC has taken reasonable measures to develop the Code in a fair, reasonable, open, unbiased, and objective manner, based on currently available data. However, further research or developments may change the current state of knowledge. Neither NAEYC nor its officers, directors, members, employees, or agents will be liable for any loss, damage, or claim with respect to any liabilities, including direct, special, indirect, or consequential damages incurred in connection with the Code or reliance on the information presented.

1 Culture includes ethnicity, racial identity, economic level, family structure, language, and religious and political beliefs, which profoundly influence each child's development and relationship to the world.

2 There is not necessarily a corresponding principle for each ideal.

3 The term family may include those adults, besides parents, with the responsibility of being involved in educating, nurturing, and advocating for the child.

This statement may be purchased as a brochure, and the Statement of Commitment is available as a poster suitable for framing. See our catalog for ordering information.

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### **NAEYC Statement of Commitment to Professional Ethics**

As an individual who works with young children, I commit myself to furthering the 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

- \* Never harm children
- \* Ensure that programs for young children are based on current knowledge and research of child development and early childhood education.
- \* Respect and support families in their task 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.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

This Statement of Commitment is not part of the Code but is a personal acknowledgement of the individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive 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 part of the profession.

## **Code of Ethical Conduct**

Adopted Spring 2004  
Supplement for Early Childhood Adult Educators

A Joint Position Statement of  
the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC),  
the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE), and  
American Associate Degree Early Childhood Teacher Educators (ACCESS)

Adopted by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

Early childhood educators who teach adults to work in early childhood settings are called upon to sustain different relationships and to balance the needs of a wider variety of clients than those who work directly with young children and their families. And as teacher educators fulfill their responsibilities to adult learners, they encounter some unique ethical challenges in the context of a complex network of relationships. The primary challenge is to find a balance between an obligation to support and nurture adult learners and the obligation to provide caring and competent professionals to work with young children and their families. While the existing NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct is a valuable resource that addresses many of the ethical issues encountered by early childhood adult educators, it does not provide all of the guidance they need to address the ethical issues that arise in their work.

Through this Supplement to the Code of Ethical Conduct, NAEYC, NAECTE, ACCESS, and NAFCC hope to identify and explore the recurring ethical dilemmas faced by early childhood adult educators, and to reach some consensus about how they might best be addressed. This Supplement places primary emphasis on the ethical responsibilities and recurring ethical dilemmas that face early childhood teacher educators in two- and four-year degree-granting institutions. However, many of its provisions are also applicable to early childhood educators who provide nondegree training and mentoring to adults in early childhood care and education settings.

### ***Purpose of the Supplement***

Like those who work with young children, early childhood adult educators are regularly called upon to make decisions of a moral and ethical nature. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct is a foundational document that maps the ethical dimensions of early childhood educators' work in early care and education programs. Adult educators share the ethical obligations assumed by all early childhood educators, reflected in the core values, ideals, and principles set forth in the NAEYC Code. We embrace the central commitment of the field of early care and education to the healthy development and welfare of young children. Everything we do in our role as educators of adults is intended to further this ultimate commitment.

Early childhood adult educators have ethical responsibilities beyond those spelled out in the NAEYC Code. They have responsibilities to adult students; institutions of higher learning and agencies that conduct training; the programs in which they place adult students and staff and clientele; professional colleagues; children and their families and community; and society and the field of early childhood care and education at large.

### ***Definitions***

#### **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 care and education workforce.

#### **Adult Learners**

Adult learners, both preservice and inservice, who work in or are preparing to work in settings that provide care and education for young children from birth through 8 years of age.

#### **Student**

An adult learner who is gaining preservice or advanced education in the field of early childhood education and care through an educational institution.

#### **Colleague**

A fellow early childhood educator who teaches, trains, or mentors adult students in an institution of higher learning or who conducts not-for-credit training for the early education workforce. (Note: There are specific responsibilities to colleagues employed by one's own institution.)

#### **Mentor**

An experienced early childhood professional who works directly with both young children and practicum students in an early childhood program and who, in collaboration with an early childhood teacher educator, guides and counsels the students.

#### **Ethics Supplement**

Material that has been added to NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct to provide further information and guidance about the ethical responsibilities of early childhood adult educators.

### ***Core values***

In addition to adhering to the core values spelled out in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, early childhood adult educators commit themselves to the following two core values:

\* To respect the critical role of a knowledgeable, competent, and diverse early childhood care and education workforce in supporting the development and learning of young children.

\* To base practice on current and accurate knowledge of the fields of early childhood education, child development, adult development and learning, as well as other relevant disciplines.

### ***Conceptual framework***

This document sets forth a conception of early childhood teacher educators' professional responsibilities in six sections that address arenas of professional relationships. The sections are (1) adult learners, (2) sites providing practicum experiences, (3) employing institutions of higher learning and agencies that provide training, (4) professional colleagues, (5) children and families, and (6) community, society, and the field of early care and education. The first three sections address those areas of responsibility unique to educators who work primarily with adults. Sections 4-6 spell out additional responsibilities of early childhood adult educators in areas addressed in the NAEYC Code. When there is a direct parallel in the NAEYC Code or a related principle or ideal, the Code is referenced after the Supplement item.

### ***Ideals and principles***

This Supplement to the NAEYC Code identifies additional ideals (aspirations) and principles (guides for conduct: definitions of practices that are required, prohibited, and permitted) that address the unique ethical responsibilities of early childhood adult educators. These ideals and principles were developed by analyzing adult educators' descriptions of recurring ethical dilemmas in their work. The goals and principles included in this Supplement are designed to inspire and guide early childhood adult educators toward actions that reflect the field's current understandings of their ethical responsibilities.

(Note: There is not a one-to-one correspondence between ideals and principles.)

#### ***1. Ethical responsibilities to adult learners***

Our work is always guided by the core values of the field of early care and education, including our commitment to ensuring the welfare of children. From that perspective we prioritize the unique commitments of early childhood adult educators and acknowledge that our day-to-day responsibilities focus primarily on the professional development of adult learners.

### *Ideals*

- I—1.1 To continually update our own knowledge of the field of early care and education so that we are able to present current, well-grounded information to those we teach.
- I—1.2 To provide college students with a foundation in core content areas of early childhood education, including child development and its social contexts; child guidance; the design of safe, healthy learning environments; curriculum and assessment; work with families; work with children and families from diverse cultures; advocacy skills; and professionalism, including ethics.
- I—1.3 To provide adult learners with learning experiences based on principles of adult learning and consistent with the core values of early care and education, current knowledge, and best practices in the field.
- I—1.4 To present controversial material fairly, acknowledging the validity of contrasting perspectives and, when appropriate, identifying our own biases.
- I—1.5 To have high and reasonable expectations of learners.
- I—1.6 To fairly and equitably assess what adult students know and are able to do.
- I—1.7 To ensure that our programs serve diverse adult learners (including diversity in language, culture, race/ethnicity, and social class).
- I—1.8 To ensure that our programs are accessible to those with diverse needs (as to the times, location, format, and language of training).

### *Principles*

- P—1.1 We shall provide learning experiences that are consistent with the best practices for adult learners and that match the needs, learning styles, cultures, and stages of development of adult learners.
- P—1.2 We shall inform learners of conduct and work expectations, including institutional standards for writing, performance, and intellectual honesty.
- P—1.3 We shall give learners a fair chance to succeed and diverse ways to demonstrate their competence.
- P—1.4 We shall provide additional support for adult learners who have the potential to work effectively with young children but have difficulty meeting academic standards.
- P—1.5 We shall provide additional support and counsel to those who demonstrate academic excellence while having difficulty in meeting standards for classroom practice.
- P—1.6 We shall inform those seeking training in early childhood education of current economic and social conditions affecting the field so that they may make an educated decision about career choices.
- P—1.7 We shall provide information about disparities between best practice and commonly accepted practice to better prepare students to face ongoing challenges related to their work with children.
- P—1.8 We shall not place students or allow students to continue in placements that, in our best professional judgment, are not beneficial to children.

P—1.9 When it becomes apparent that a practicum placement is not supporting a student’s professional development or is not beneficial to the student or children, every effort shall be made to move the student to a more appropriate placement.

P—1.10 When it becomes apparent that an adult learner is not able to benefit from our training, class, or program, we shall help her/him identify an alternative educational path or goal.

P—1.11 We shall honor confidentiality, sharing only necessary information about an adult learner, only to those who need to know, and only through appropriate professional channels.

P—1.12 We shall make it clear at the outset if training involves the sale of products or services from which we stand to gain financially and will do this only if the products or services are relevant and serve educational goals.

## ***2. Ethical responsibilities to practicum sites***

Some knowledge and skills needed by early childhood educators can only be acquired through direct experience in early childhood settings. Therefore, early childhood adult educators rely heavily on placements in programs (practicum sites) in which students can apply what they have learned, get feedback from children and adults, and reflect on what they have learned from their experience.

### *Ideals*

I—2.1 To provide practicum experiences that will positively support the professional development of adult students.

I—2.2 To foster collegial and collaborative working relationships with educators who work in practicum settings.

I—2.3 To be respectful of the responsibilities, expertise, and perspective of practitioners who work with students in practicum settings.

I—2.4 To recognize the importance and contributions of practicum staff members in the professional development of our students.

### *Principles*

P—2.1 We shall place students in settings where staff are qualified to work with young children, where mentors have experience and training in supporting adult learners, and which to the greatest extent possible reflect the diverse communities in which our students will be working.

P—2.2 We shall clearly state all parties’ roles and responsibilities and prepare students, mentors, and administrators for practicum experiences. We shall provide appropriate support for all parties’ efforts to fulfill their roles and meet program expectations.

P—2.3 When we have a concern about a program in which we place students, we shall address that concern with the classroom teacher or program administrator. (If the

concerns relate to the health or safety of children, see the applicable sections of the NAEYC Code: P-1.11 and P-4.9-12.)

P—2.4 We shall ensure that qualified personnel conduct regular supervision of practicum experiences in order to support professional development of adult students and monitor the welfare of children.

P—2.5 We shall honor confidentiality and guard the privacy of the programs (teachers and clientele) in which we place students.

P—2.6 We shall teach adult students that they have a professional obligation to honor confidentiality and shall make every effort to ensure that they guard the privacy of the program, its teachers, and clientele.

### ***3. Ethical obligations to institutions of higher learning and agencies providing training***

Our primary responsibility to our employers is the development of knowledge and skill in adult learners. This work is intended to further our ultimate commitment to the welfare and development of young children. (Section III-B of the NAEYC Code provides the foundation for the additional commitments for adult educators listed below.)

#### *Ideals*

I—3.1 To assist the institutions and agencies for whom we work in providing the highest quality of educational programs for adult learners. (NAEYC Code I-3B.1)

#### *Principles*

P—3.1 We shall respect the integrity of courses by following approved course descriptions.

P—3.2 We shall evaluate our adult learners fairly, using those standards that are congruent with the mission of our institution and regarded as accepted practice in the field.

P—3.3 We shall offer training and instruction only in areas in which we have or can obtain appropriate experience and expertise. (NAEYC Code P-4.2)

P—3.4 We shall, when our involvement with a student involves more than one role (e.g., instructor, employer, supervisor), keep these roles separate. We shall make decisions, recommendations, and give feedback appropriate to the different contexts.

### ***4. Ethical responsibilities regarding colleagues***

The work of the early childhood adult educator involves interaction and collaboration with colleagues. Our professional responsibility to colleagues is to maintain positive and productive working relationships. (Section III-A of the NAEYC Code provides the foundation for the additional commitments for adult educators listed below.)

### *Ideals*

I—4.1 To be collegial to and supportive of early childhood coworkers in our own and other institutions. (NAEYC Code I-3A.1-4)

I—4.2 To serve as mentors to junior faculty and novice adult educators.

### *Principles*

P—4.1 When an adult learner comes to us with concerns about a colleague's competence, fairness, ethics, or accuracy, we will give the learner support in clarifying his or her concerns and in deciding and following through on a course of action to address the problem.

P—4.2 When we have concerns regarding a colleague's competence, fairness, ethics, or accuracy, we will first express our concerns to that colleague. (NAEYC Code P-3A.2.)

P—4.3 When a colleague appears unwilling or unable to address problems, we will express our opinions about his or her competence through official channels such as performance evaluation.

P—4.4 We shall honor confidentiality and share information about colleagues in appropriate institutional settings. We shall not share information about colleagues in the community or with students.

## **5. Ethical responsibilities to children and families**

Because those we train have a direct impact on children's lives, early childhood adult educators have some additional responsibilities to children and families above and beyond what is set forth in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.

### *Ideals*

I—5.1 To support the development of competent and caring professionals to work with young children and their families.

I—5.2 To provide a diverse workforce that reflects the linguistic, racial/ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds of the children served in early childhood programs and their communities.

I—5.3 To speak out against practices that are unjust or harmful to young children and their families.

### *Principles*

P—5.1 We shall make the welfare of children the deciding factor in our decisions regarding our work with adult learners. We shall not participate in or overlook practices (in our students, colleagues, institutions, agencies, or practicum settings) that are harmful to children. This principle has precedence over all others in this Supplement. (NAEYC Code P-1.1)

P—5.2 We shall provide sound educational experiences for those we teach that enable them to understand and provide for the optimal development of children and support for their families.

P—5.3 We shall not allow a student to complete a program if we have direct evidence that he/she may endanger children's physical or psychological well being.

P—5.4 We shall not allow a student to pass a course or move to the next level of the profession if he/she has not demonstrated expected levels of knowledge and competence in course content or if he/she does not demonstrate the ability to relate positively and effectively with children and families.

P—5.5 We shall build into all required training minimum required levels of participation and demonstrations of understanding and competence.

P—5.6 When we have made a concerted effort to work with a student, and the student still does not demonstrate the intellectual, physical, or social-emotional capacity to work effectively with children and families, we shall make every effort to counsel the student out of the field.

P—5.7 We shall use the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct to assist adult learners in making sound decisions concerning their work with children and families.

## ***6. Ethical responsibilities to community, society, and the field of early childhood education***

Early childhood adult educators have extensive knowledge, expertise, and education and often have a profound impact on the field of early childhood education in their communities. Because of this leadership role they have responsibilities to community, society, and the field of early childhood education above and beyond what is expected of those who work in programs serving young children.

### *Ideals*

I—6.1 To train caring and competent teachers who will provide safe and nurturing care and education for young children and be supportive of their families.

I—6.2 To prepare students to work successfully in and to respect the culture of the communities in which they are placed.

I—6.3 To continue to grow and learn and to base practice on the best current knowledge available.

I—6.4 To encourage the developing professionalism of the adult learners with whom we work.

I—6.5 To make other professionals, the public, and policy makers aware of the importance of the early years and the positive impact on society of high-quality early childhood programs staffed by well-trained early childhood professionals.

I—6.6 To strengthen and expand the knowledge base of early childhood education.

I—6.7 To advocate on behalf of children, families, high-quality programs and services for children, and professional development for the early childhood workforce.

I—6.8 To conduct research that reflects the experiences of children from diverse language, racial/ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

*Principles*

P—6.1 We shall be accurate and truthful when we provide recommendations and serve as references for individuals seeking admission to programs, applying for certification, or seeking employment.

P—6.2 In our role as early care and education experts, we shall base recommendations on our informed and unbiased professional opinion. We shall exercise caution before recommending commercial products or services.

P—6.3 When asked to provide an informed opinion on issues/practices, we shall make every effort to support children and families by basing our statements on current child development and early childhood education research.

P—6.4 We shall help adult learners learn to interpret and communicate assessment information in ways that convey the strengths of children and the limitations of the evaluation instruments.

P—6.5 We shall ensure that research we conduct appropriately reflects the diversity of the population upon whom its results may have future impact.

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