

Code of Ethics

by the Canadian Child Care Federation adapted
from the Code of Ethics of the Early Childhood Educators of B.C.

Introduction

Child care practitioners¹ work with one of society's most vulnerable groups – young children. The quality of the interactions between young children and the adults who care for them has a significant, enduring impact on children's lives. The intimacy of the relationship and the potential to do harm call for a commitment on the part of child care practitioners to the highest standards of ethical practice.

Child care practitioners accept the ethical obligation to understand and work effectively with children in the context of family, culture and community. Child care practitioners care for and educate young children. However, ethical practice extends beyond the child/practitioner relationship. Child care practitioners also support parents² as primary caregivers of their children and liaise with other professionals and community resources on behalf of children and families.

The Canadian Child Care Federation and its affiliate organizations recognize their responsibility to promote ethical practices and attitudes on the part of child care practitioners. The following principles, explanations and standards of practice are designed to help child care practitioners monitor their professional practice and guide their decision-making. These ethical principles are based on the *Code of Ethics* of the Early Childhood Educators of B.C. They have been adapted for use by adults who work with children and families in a variety of child care and related settings. They are intended both to guide practitioners and to protect the children and families with whom they work.

Professionalism creates additional ethical obligations to colleagues and to the profession.

Eight ethical principles of practice are presented. These principles are intended to guide child care practitioners in deciding what conduct is most appropriate when they encounter ethical problems in the course of their work. Each principle is followed by an explanation and a list of standards of practice that represent an application of the principle in a child care or related setting.

The ethical practice of child care practitioners reflects the eight principles. However, the resolution of ethical dilemmas can be difficult and there will be circumstances in which the ethical principles will conflict. In these difficult situations, it is recommended that child care practitioners carefully think through the likely consequences of giving priority to particular principles. By evaluating the consequences, it may become clear which principle ought to be given more weight. The preferred action should be the one which produces the least amount of avoidable harm. Child care practitioners are also encouraged to consult with colleagues to obtain different perspectives on the problem, always being mindful of confidentiality issues. However, the final decision will be made by the individual practitioner facing the ethical dilemma.

Child care practitioners promote the health and well-being of all children.

Child care practitioners are responsible for the children in their care. They create environments for children that are safe, secure and supportive of good

The Principles of the Code

- Child care practitioners promote the health and well-being of all children.
- Child care practitioners enable children to participate to their full potential in environments carefully planned to serve individual needs and to facilitate the child's progress in the social, emotional, physical and cognitive areas of development.
- Child care practitioners demonstrate caring for all children in all aspects of their practice.
- Child care practitioners work in partnership with parents, recognizing that parents have primary responsibility for the care of their children, valuing their commitment to the children and supporting them in meeting their responsibilities to their children.
- Child care practitioners work in partnership with colleagues and other service providers in the community to support the well-being of children and their families.
- Child care practitioners work in ways that enhance human dignity in trusting, caring and co-operative relationships that respect the worth and uniqueness of the individual.
- Child care practitioners pursue, on an ongoing basis, the knowledge, skills and self-awareness needed to be professionally competent.
- Child care practitioners demonstrate integrity in all of their professional relationships.

health in the broadest sense. They design programs that provide children with opportunities to develop physically, socially, emotionally, morally, spiritually, cognitively and creatively. A healthy environment for children is one in which each child's self-esteem is enhanced, play is encouraged and a warm, loving atmosphere is maintained.

In following this principle, a child care practitioner:

- promotes each child's health and well-being;
- creates and maintains safe and healthy environments for children;
- fosters all facets of children's development in the context of the child, their family and their community;
- enhances each child's feelings of competence, independence and self-esteem;
- refrains from in any way degrading, endangering, frightening or harming children;
- acts as an advocate on behalf of all children for public policies, programs and services that enhance their health and well-being; and
- acts promptly in situations where the well-being of the child is compromised.

Child care practitioners enable children to participate to their full potential in environments that are carefully planned to serve individual needs and to facilitate the child's progress in the social, emotional, physical and cognitive areas of development.

Child care practitioners understand the sequences and patterns of child development and cultural influences on those patterns. They use this knowledge to create environments and plan programs that are responsive to the children in their care. Child care practitioners implement programs and use guidance techniques that take into account the ages of the children and individual variations in their development.

In following this principle, a child care practitioner:

- considers cross-cultural variations in child-rearing approaches when assessing child development;
- applies the knowledge that the stages of physical, social, emotional, moral and cognitive development of each child may be different;
- determines where each child is on the various developmental continua and uses that knowledge to create programs that allow for individual differences and preferences; and
- uses developmentally appropriate methods and materials in working with children.

Child care practitioners demonstrate caring for all children in all aspects of their practice.

Caring involves both love and labour. Caring is at the core of early childhood education and is reflected in the mental, emotional and physical efforts of child care practitioners in their interactions with all children. Being cared for and cared about is consistently communicated to all children.

In following this principle, a child care practitioner:

- responds appropriately to each child's expressions of need;
- provides children with experiences that build trust;
- expresses warmth, appropriate affection, consideration and acceptance for children both verbally and non-verbally;
- communicates to children a genuine interest in their activities, ideas, opinions and concerns; and
- supports children as they experience different emotions and models acceptable ways of expressing emotions.

Child care practitioners work in partnership with parents, recognizing that the parents have primary responsibility for the care of their children, valuing their commitment to their children and supporting them in meeting their responsibilities to their children.

Child care practitioners share joint interest in the children in their care while recognizing that parents have primary responsibility for child-rearing and decision-making on behalf of their children. Child care practitioners complement and support parents as they carry out these responsibilities. Through positive, respectful and supportive relationships with parents, child care practitioners advance the well-being of children.

In following this principle, a child care practitioner:

- promotes considerate relationships with the parents of the children in care;

- respects the rights of parents to transmit their values, beliefs and cultural heritage to their children;
- supports parents with knowledge, skills and resources that will enhance their ability to nurture their children;
- encourages and provides opportunities for parents to participate actively in all aspects of planning and decision-making affecting their children; and
- builds upon strengths and competencies in supporting parents in their task of nurturing children.

Child care practitioners work in partnership with colleagues and other service providers in the community to support the well-being of children and their families.

Child care practitioners recognize that nurturing family environments benefit children. Child care practitioners work with other helping professionals to provide a network of support for families.

In following this principle, a child care practitioner:

- supports and encourages families by developing programs that meet the needs of those families being serviced;
- assists families in obtaining needed specialized services provided by other professionals; and
- advocates public policies and community services that are supportive of families.

Child care practitioners work in ways that enhance human dignity in trusting, caring and cooperative relationships that respect the worth and uniqueness of the individual.

Child care practitioners welcome and cherish children unconditionally. They respect the dignity of children, parents, colleagues and others with whom they interact. They demonstrate respect for diversity by valuing individuality and appreciating diverse characteristics including ideas and perspectives.

In following this principle, a child care practitioner:

- communicates respect by practising and promoting anti-bias interactions;
- supports and promotes the dignity of self and others by engaging in mutually enhancing relationships;
- plans inclusive programs that communicate respect for diversity regarding ability, culture, gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and family composition; and
- provides opportunities for all children to participate in childhood activities.

Child care practitioners pursue, on an ongoing basis the knowledge, skills and self-awareness needed to be professionally competent.

Early childhood professional practice is based on an expanding body of literature and research. Continuing education is essential. In-service skills training and self-awareness work prepare child care practitioners to fulfil their responsibilities more effectively.

In following this principle, a child care practitioner:

- recognizes the need for continuous learning;
- pursues professional development opportunities;
- incorporates into practice current knowledge in the field of early childhood care and education and related disciplines;
- assesses personal and professional strengths and limitations and undertakes self-improvement;
- articulates a personal philosophy of practice and justifies practices on the basis of theoretical perspectives; and
- shares knowledge to support the development of the field.

Child care practitioners demonstrate integrity in all of their professional relationships.

Child care practitioners are truthful and trustworthy. They communicate honestly and openly and endeavour to be accurate and objective. Child care practitioners treat as confidential information about the children, families and colleagues with whom they work.

Information may be shared with colleagues and other helping professionals as required for the care and support of the children or as required by law. Child care practitioners acknowledge real or potential conflicts of interest and act in accordance with the principles of this code of ethics.

In following this principle, a child care practitioner:

- communicates with children, parents, colleagues and other professionals in an honest, straightforward manner;
- conscientiously carries out professional responsibilities and duties;
- identifies personal values and beliefs and strives to be objective;
- treats as confidential information concerning children, families and colleagues unless failure to disclose would put children at risk; and
- recognizes the potential for real or perceived conflict of interest and acts in accordance with the principles of the code where dual relationships with colleagues or families exist and/or develop.

Notes

1. This code uses the term *child care practitioner* to refer to adults who work in the field of child care including: early childhood educators; family child care providers; family resource program personnel; resource and referral program personnel; and instructors in early childhood care and education programs in post-secondary institutions.
2. This code uses the term "parent" to refer to the parent or legal guardian or the adult who assumes the parental role in the care of the child.