



Guardians of Trust: Upholding Boundaries, Ethics, and Confidentiality in Early Childhood Programs

Presented to the LANL Early Childhood Foundation



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Objectives

- **Increase** Understanding of Professional Boundaries in Early Childhood Settings
- **Apply** Ethical Standards and Decision-Making in Early Childhood Education
- **Elevate** Safeguarding Confidentiality: Protecting Sensitive Information
- **Foster** Trust and Safe Environments Through Professionalism

Picture a moment when a child feels safe and supported, because your boundaries and ethics created a world where they could soar.

What would you do to protect this baby? How will you protect his family? His privacy? His data/information?

Today, let's dive into the heart of early childhood professional practices—crafting spaces where trust, care, and integrity transform lives.





Understanding Professional Boundaries in Early Childhood Programs

Small Group: Expectations

1. Join a breakout room and identify someone who will record your ideas.
2. Discuss two rounds of questions
3. Four minutes per round
4. Be on the lookout for the broadcast message to switch to round 2





Round One Discussion: 4 minutes

Group 1

What do families
and children
expect from you?

Group 2

What do your
colleagues and co-
workers expect
from you?

What do Professional Boundaries mean to you?



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Recognizing and Responding to Boundary Crossings



Example: All work for a family must be performed during business hours.



Establish clear professional boundaries early and often



Use work communication devices



Decline personal invitations, including social media



Know your scope of work or job description



Establish consistent routines



Engage in reflective supervision

Maintain
Healthy
Boundaries
with Children,
Families, and
Colleagues

A boundary might be crossed if...

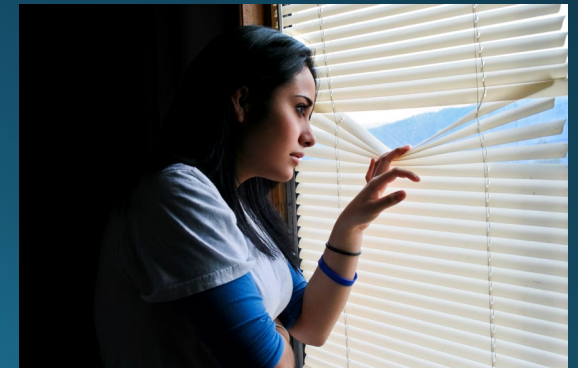
You are thinking/worrying about a family during non-work hours



You feel tempted to offer favors for a family that you would not offer to all families



You are reluctant to talk about this family with colleagues



Ethical Standards and Confidentiality in Early Childhood Programs





Core Ethical Principles for Early Childhood Professionals

Values

Respect

Fairness

Responsibility

Integrity

NAEYC Code of Ethics

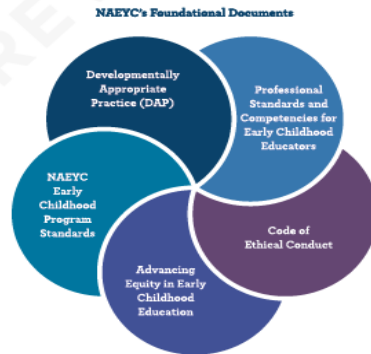
Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators

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.

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.



1. Ethical Responsibilities to Children
2. Ethical Responsibilities to Families
3. Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues & Employers
4. Ethical Responsibilities to Community & Society



National Alliance for Infant Mental Health Code of Ethics:

Confidentiality

Respect for Ethnicity, Culture, Individuality and Diversity

Importance of Relationships

Integrity

Knowledge and Skill Building

Reflective Practice



Personal vs Professional Beliefs

Best Interests of Children

Ethical Decision-Making

**Balancing
Personal Values with
Professional Ethics**



Common Ethical issues

- Confidentiality
- Conflicts of interest
- Record keeping/documentation
- Boundary issues and dual-relationships
- Legal advocacy versus legal advice
- Professional competence (self-disclosure)
- Gifting
- Client's right to self-determination
- Physical contact (sexual relationships, sexual harassment)
- Reporting suspected child maltreatment and/or neglect
- Mental health concerns



con·fi·den·tial [ˌkɒnfəˈden(t)ʃ(ə)l]

1. intended to be kept secret:

"confidential information" · "knowledge that was privileged"

Professional Responsibilities Regarding Confidentiality



Standards of Professional Conduct

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. Section 1232g, 34 C.F.R. Part 99)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. Section 1401 et seq., 34 C.F.R. Part 300),

Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (Section 43-1-19, NMSA 1978)

Inspection of Public Records Act (Section 14-2-1 et seq., NMSA 1978)

Children's Code (Sections 32A-2-32, 32A-4-3, NMSA 1978),



- **Accurate Record Keeping**
- **Secure Data Handling**
- **Thoughtful Information Sharing**
- **Importance of Confidentiality**
- **Strategies for Protection**
- **Risks of Poor Management**

Maintaining
Confidentiality



BREAK




Applying Decision- Making to Ethical Dilemmas



Standard Decision-Making Process

1. Identify the ethical issue
2. Gather all the facts and information
3. Identify stakeholders
4. Evaluate options and consequences
5. Consult ethical guidelines, codes, standards
6. Make a decision
7. Act and document
8. Reflect and follow up



1. You observe a colleague aggressively pulling a child's hair while working.

2. A program has one spot for a child with special needs, and two children qualify. The manager must decide which family gets the spot and is related to one family.

3. A three-year-old child tells you about abuse at home. The child has welts and bruises in the shape of a shoe.

4. A family you have been home visiting with for the past year invites you to their child's birthday party.



Small Groups (20 minutes)

1. Read the ethical dilemma for your group
2. Choose one person who will facilitate the discussion and share back with the larger group
3. Use the NAEYC Code of Ethics as your guide
4. Discuss each step of the decision-making process regarding the ethical dilemma

Look for the announcements to help you keep track of time

The background of the slide features a semi-transparent image of the Guardians of the Galaxy cast. Star-Lord, Gamora, Drax, Rocket Raccoon, and Groot are visible in the upper half, while Mantis and Nebula are in the lower half. They are posed in a group, with a large planet in the background.

Conclusion

- Boundaries prevent harm
 - Ethics guide decisions
 - Confidentiality builds trust
-
- What is your personal commitment for guarding boundaries, ethics and confidentiality?

Resources

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/2024_code_of_ethics_for_early_childhood_educators_final_3.pdf

New Mexico Administrative Code: (Rules) <https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/new-mexico>

New Mexico Children's Code: (State Laws) <https://www.cyfd.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/chapter-32a-children-s-code-2023.pdf>

New Mexico Code of Ethics: (Primary and Secondary Educators) <https://www.neanm.org/nm-code-ethics>

New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department

<https://www.nmececd.org/>