
The Naeyc Code of Ethical Conduct

The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct was developed to uphold the application of core values, ideals, and principles to assist teachers’ decision-making about ethical issues. The Core Values of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct is based on the foundation of the field’s commitment to young children. It is noteworthy that all seven of the Code’s Core Values directly address our commitment to children:

- 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.

The first section of the Code addresses our responsibilities to young children. Twelve ideas emphasize the importance of program practices on knowledge of child development and remind early childhood educators that they are responsible for creating programs that meet the developmental needs of all children in ways that respect their culture, language, ethnicity and family structure. The twelve principles in this section of the Code describe practices that are required, permitted, or prohibited as we work with young children. It is this section of the Code that I find the most challenging. There is also a great deal of responsibility in the managing and leading of employees.

NAEYC Ideal I-3C.1 states that employers are “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” (Decker, Decker, Freeman, & Knopf, 2009, p. 359). Additionally, administrators are also responsible for the hiring and terminating of employees in which professionalism is the importance.

NAEYC code P-3C.5 maintains, “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 reason for their termination. When a dismissal is for cause, justification must be based on evidence of inadequate or inappropriate behavior that is accurately documented,

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current, and available for the employee to review”.

When a center implements the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, parents, employees and the community know that the center is committed to “promoting children’s self-awareness, competence, self-worth, resiliency, and physical well-being”. If a center implements and follows the NAEYC code of conduct, families and, employees would know that the center cares about the health and protection of all who are involved with the center. The NAEYC “affirms the responsibility of states to license and regulate the early care and education market by regulating schools”.

NAEYC standards provide specific guidelines regarding ethics that pertain to all levels that are involved in the childcare field. Parents, teachers, administrators, and the center itself are covered by the NAEYC code. There is one principle that has priority over all others in the Code of Ethics. Principle 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. It is this principle that is the most viable above all the others. This principle is the framework of what the code of conduct is based on.

The Code of Ethics can help us understand what our professional responsibilities are to the children in our care, to the families of the children, to co-workers, and to the community and society in general. In Section 1, Ethical Responsibilities to Children, Ideal 1-1.10 states that we are “to ensure that each child’s culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure are recognized and valued in the program” (Decker, Decker, Freeman, & Knopf, 2009, p. 356).

Furthermore, Ideal 1-1.11 states that we are “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” (Decker, Decker, Freeman, & Knopf, 2009, p. 356). It is my opinion there are many teachers that may have a problem in maintaining this standard simply because of the location of their center. If a center is in a semi-rural area, the teachers in the center could have a problem teaching about other cultures with exception to basic knowledge of a culture. Take for instance Middlefield Ohio. In Middlefield, there is a heavy influence of the Amish culture and generations of farming families. A teacher in Middlefield may have trouble relating to a child in her class that comes from India. It is a challenging task to learn and educate oneself on an unknown topic, there is a great deal of responsibility in planning a diverse curriculum to meet the needs of so many individuals.

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