

ECE Ethical Leadership

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DR. TAMMY MARINO



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Welcome to Leadership in Early Care and Education – Ethical Leadership! We hope you find this text helpful, thought provoking, and affirming. We created this text to support learning in a couple

of different. This text can be used from start to finish, or as modules that you (the instructor or the student) select based on your learning outcomes.

We created this text with these principles in mind:

- Anyone can be a leader at any time. Leadership is not title specific and the field of Early Care and Education needs leaders from diverse background, experiences, and expertise.
- Leadership has an inherent set of responsibilities and leaders need to understand what those are and how to navigate them.
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion are important topics and leadership should be grounded in them.
- Reflection is a key part of professional practice and should be encouraged and supported at all levels.
- It is important to represent a variety of contexts, individuals and scenarios.
- White space is important. How we interact with learning materials is important. We hope you will find our design effective.

Leaders in Early Childhood Education and K-12 Education exist at levels and take many different paths to leadership. Some receive formal education and while many find themselves in leadership roles because they have the most tenure. Most become leaders through a combination of education and experience – and all are woefully underprepared for what they experience.

These modules were designed to empower leaders at all levels and in any educational context. We realize that is a lofty goal and we felt it was important to aspire to ensure that all leaders could see themselves in the scenarios and strategies we share. We have been in leadership roles and know how challenging and complex leadership in education can be.

We created these modules with the understanding of the importance of several key leadership influences. We felt it was critical that the topic of leadership be intertwined with the topic of

Ethics. Leaders set the tone and provide opportunities for ethical behavior to thrive or to be silenced. We also developed this course material with an emphasis for diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is essential that leaders represent the stakeholders, families, and communities they serve. It is equally important that leaders are culturally responsive and tackle topics such as bias and systemic racism.

These modules are developed to celebrate the diverse leaders in the world of education and to empower new and existing leaders. Leadership can happen any place, in any position, and at any time. We are excited to support all students; wherever they may be on the leadership journey!

This text is part of a collaborative process and we want to encourage continued collaboration from our colleagues, students, and stakeholders. If you have information that you think is important to include please contact Tammy Marino at tammy.marino@socc.edu. Let's have a conversation!

Dr. Sally Guyon, Dr. Tammy Marino, Taya Noland, and Dr. Maidie Rosengarden

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About the Author



Dr. Tammy Marino

Dr. Tammy Marino earned her Education Doctorate in Organizational Leadership at Northcentral University. She has her MBA in Organizational and Leadership Development with a focus on training and adult development. She has been working in the field of early care and education for over 30 years;

supporting professionals and programs with consulting, coaching, and training. Dr. Marino is a national and international speaker with a focus on leadership development and presented over 35,000 hours of leadership and development training and coursework. Since 2009 she has been teaching at institutions of higher education in early childhood and elementary education programs. Dr. Marino has been teaching at Southwestern Oregon Community College since 2016 and at Clackamas Community College since 2009. She is passionate about leadership and professional development and designing and providing learning programs that are culturally and linguistically responsive.

I.



Learning Objectives

Objective 1: Describe the ethical responsibilities that guide programs for early care and education and the professionals that work in them.

Objective 2: Use the NAEYC code of ethical conduct to guide decision making[TM1] .

Objective 3: Recognize how culture, bias, and belief systems impact and influence ethical dilemmas.

What are ethics? From a practical standpoint it can be difficult to connect to the concept because they are ideals and principles we aspire and work towards. Ethics can be easy to read about and then set aside as something you don't really need or might come back to some day. However, ethics are something you use everyday in decision making, relationships, and interactions with children, families, colleagues, and your community.

As an early care and education professional, I would frequently be faced with any of the following ethical scenarios:

1. Responding to a parent when they ask me to keep their 3 year old from napping because they are not sleeping at night.
2. Unpacking a child's lunch that included a sandwich made out of chocolate chips, marshmallow crème and sprinkles—every day. Yes every day!
3. Overhearing a team member complaining about another team member.
4. Being asked by my supervisor to “just do this today because licensing is coming by.”

How did I navigate these challenges? Sometimes not too well. But once I learned there was a tool to use, the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Code of Ethical Conduct, I was much better prepared to recognize and respond to ethical dilemmas when they occurred! The NAEYC created the Code of Ethical Conduct to guide professionals in how to navigate ethical situations and dilemmas. Let's first dive into some definitions and foundational concepts.

Commonly Used Words

Ethics, ethical responsibilities, and ethical leadership are big topics that we will introduce in this module.

Ethics are moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity.

Ethical responsibilities is the ability to recognize, interpret, and act upon multiple principles and values according to the standards within a given field and/or context.

Ethical Leadership is defined as "leadership demonstrating and promoting 'normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relations'."

Is there a connection between values, morality, and ethics? Generally, the words are used interchangeably. There is, however, a difference:

- Values are the qualities we believe intrinsically to be desirable and that we prize for ourselves
- Morality is usually more theoretical; it is a philosophical concept that is about our beliefs about right and wrong
- Ethics are the practical application of morality in daily life. The term ethics refers to a conscious deliberation regarding moral choices.

The difference is that of theory and practice. If a person has a moral character, he or she will generally deal with other people in an ethical manner.

Example

I'm considering stealing a cookie. I value honesty, and morally I believe stealing is wrong. My personal ethics then guide me that because I value honesty, I decide not to steal the cookie. If I did steal the cookie, I would be acting outside of my values. Easy—right? Only if you are planning on stealing a cookie. Our personal values, ethics, and morality are developed based on our experiences as we grow. If each professional applied their personal code of ethics to their work with children and families it would be very difficult to navigate.

NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct

A code of ethics is adopted by a profession to assist the members in distinguishing right from wrong within the context of early childhood education and independent of personal values and belief systems. While it may seem that right and wrong or very concrete and easy concepts, in the work with children and families it is not always an easy choice to make. For leaders, the decisions can be even harder and often leads to a choice that makes someone unhappy. Remember, the Code of Ethical Conduct is based on our profession, not our personal values.

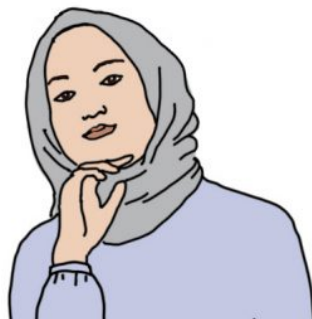
The National Association for the Education of Young Children has created and shared the Ethical Code of Conduct and the Ethical Code of Conduct for Administrators to guide the decision making of ECE professionals. But what is our code of ethics? And why is it important to our profession? Great questions!

The Code of Ethical Conduct is sectioned by category of responsibility. Ethical responsibilities to children, families, colleagues, and community. (code of conduct will be hyper linked here). As you work through this module, you will notice that each section is divided into Ideals and Principles to offer guidance in our work with children and families. Take a look at the Ethical Code of Conduct and familiarize yourself on how it is organized and what the profession has determined is important to know and understand.

Deeper dives can be found on the NAEYC website. There are many resources available and you are encouraged to see the resources at the end of the modules for further study.

Seven Videos on the NAEYC
Code of Ethical Conduct:

[https://www.youtube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUsoH1QYBXs&list=PLKHYPqmkLJq20IMUPWMF8FPQdVvb0UZ2f)



[watch?v=zUsoH1QYBXs&list=PLKHYPqmkLJq20IMUPWMF8FPQdVvb0UZ2f](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUsoH1QYBXs&list=PLKHYPqmkLJq20IMUPWMF8FPQdVvb0UZ2f)

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.



After reading the Code of Ethical Conduct and watching the videos, think about the challenges listed at the beginning of this module. Would the Code of Ethical Conduct have been helpful? Why or why not?

Many of the decisions you make on a daily basis are fairly easy or follow a specific program policy. Some decisions are tougher and can involve values and beliefs systems or cultural differences, which can lead to an ethical dilemma. Ethical dilemmas occur when it is not clear what the best solution is and choosing one solution violates the other.

Example

A parent may ask you to keep their 4 year old awake during nap time because they are not going to bed until late in the evening. We have an ethical responsibility to support the development of children (allow them to sleep when they need to) and we also have an ethical responsibility to honor families as a child's first teachers and to listen and respect their input into how their children are raised. Tough decision! This is where the Code of Ethical Conduct can help you.

The Code of Ethical Conduct reads:

- 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-2.4—We shall ensure that the family is involved in significant decisions affecting their child.
- P-2.2—We shall inform families of program philosophy, policies, curriculum, assessment system, cultural practices, and personnel qualifications, and explain why we teach as we do—which should be in accordance with our ethical responsibilities to children.

In this example, the Code of Ethical Conduct would offer guidance as to how to communicate with the family about what is developmentally appropriate for the child and what your program policies are. You could empathize with the family and share your understanding about how difficult it can be when children don't sleep. You could share that your program policies state that children are offered rest time and if they fall asleep they are not to be woken up. You could discuss different options (if any) and select a choice that honors the family and adheres to the ethical code of conduct. One solution could be a family member picking up the child during nap time and returning them in the afternoon after nap is over.

Ethical situations are a challenge in every early care and education setting. This is why it is critical that professionals understand the different terms, how they connect, and how the Code of Ethical Conduct can support professionals in navigating ethical situations.

The Code of Ethical Conduct is not just about situations with children and families. It is also used to support leaders in understanding their ethical responsibilities. As a leader you have the opportunity to influence other people's behaviors and share your knowledge and experiences. This means that you must be careful and consider your actions through the lens of ethics.

Ethical Leadership



What do you think is important for a leader to be? What values do you hold for yourself and others in leadership positions?

Leaders by their very nature wield power over others in some capacity. Even in a Collective Leadership Model, you are often able to make decisions, allocate resources, and behave in ways that greatly impact other people. This power can be tempting to use in ways that may not be ethical; e.g., to favor one person's needs over another or to demand compliance over a questionable policy.

Three key questions for ethical leadership include:

1. What is the relationship and balance of power between me as a leader and those I have influence over? Do I have too much power as a leader? Do others feel they have input in decisions I make that impact them?
2. Do I sometimes feel tempted to ignore a rule or offer an exception?
3. Am I trustworthy? Do I follow through on what I say and am I there to support my team members?

Key
Takeaways

Trust

Communication is one of the areas where ethics and leadership can get caught up in culture, values and beliefs. In some cultures, it is a cultural norm to:

- To be untruthful, be vague or less than forthcoming with all of the truth to spare someone shame or embarrassment or be very direct and open.
- To appeal to another person's emotions to get

what you want or to be factual and analytical with your request.

- To keep secrets or to share everything with others.

In the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct supplement for Early Childhood Program Administrators, there are a couple of key principles that can offer guidance in these situations:

- P-3.1—We shall provide staff members with safe and supportive working conditions that respect human dignity, honor confidences, and permit them to carry out their responsibilities through performance evaluation, written grievance procedures, constructive feedback, and opportunities for continuing professional development and advancement.
- P-3.2—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 easily accessible and available for review by all staff members.

In each case, leaders must carefully weigh the policies of the program with the individual skills and competencies of each team member. Educating other professionals about the Code of Ethical Conduct is a great place to start!

is a critical responsibility for a leader. When you and your team members trust each other, there are fewer ethical situations. Why? Because you demonstrate behavior that is respectful, collaborative, and transparent. Your fellow

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Think of different people you have worked with who demonstrate one or more of these cultural values and beliefs listed. How might you approach each situation differently as a result of learning about the Code of Ethical Conduct?

Ethics and Confidentiality

Why is it important to maintain confidentiality when working with children and families? What type of information is important to keep confidential?

Confidentiality is critically important when working with children and families.

Confidentiality is defined as keeping information secure and separate, only available for those who need to have it. There are several principles in the Code of Ethical Conduct that speak directly to confidentiality.

The following principles from the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct relate directly to confidentiality.

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

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-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.

As you can see, confidentiality encompasses your work with children, families, and coworkers. Most organizations have confidentiality policies that include written and verbal confidentiality. Those policies may include:



- Keeping children's files in a secure location.
- Keeping staff files in a secure location.
- Not posting sensitive information (such as medical info) in public view.
- Not providing children's last names on written labels.
- Directing staff to not have conversations about children or families within hearing of other staff, children or families.
- Directing staff to not have conversations about children or families with others who are not engaged with the family or child.

It is critically important to know what your organization's policies are regarding confidentiality!



Maintaining confidentiality can be challenging sometimes. It can be incredibly difficult for educators to avoid talking with their friends or partners about sensitive situations at work. We care about the children and our close relationships with them. Think about a time you had to maintain confidentiality for sensitive information. What actions

did you take? How did these actions align with the Code Of Ethical Conduct?

Ethics and Culture

Culture reflects the agreed-upon set of morals and beliefs that indicate how people within a specific group interact. As you interact with different groups, you bring your personal set of values and beliefs to these relationships. The more individuals engage, the more opportunities for values and ethics to come into conflict. Therefore, as a profession, it is critical that professionals adhere to the Code of Ethical Conduct.

But that is not always easy! Personal biases, beliefs, and experiences influence our judgement and how we interact. Portions of the Code of Ethical Conduct can be open to interpretation by individuals, making it challenging to know what is the “right” thing to do.

Questions you must ask yourself...

- Are you willing to ask questions to better understand cultural differences?
- Are you willing to educate yourself on the cultures of the families you serve?
- Are you willing to confront your personal biases and work towards resolving them?
- Are you willing to speak out when a policy or procedure seems unfair?

Understanding that an acceptable behavior in one culture may not be acceptable in another can go a long way toward untangling complex ethical challenges. It is up to you as a leader to commit to ethical behavior that is reflective and respectful.

How do culture and values impact ethical dilemmas? Great question! Let's dive deeper in a few examples.

NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct says:

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 to ensure a culturally consistent environment for all children and families.

Example

Let's say the cultural norms of one family were that children did not make eye contact with adults unless spoken to directly. Another family's culture promotes making eye contact and initiating conversation with adults. How would you honor the first family's culture while at the same time supporting the second family's culture? At first glance it may seem easy—simply allow each child to behave in a manner that suits them. Unfortunately, if you are teaching in a classroom that supports American culture, the first child may feel they are wrong for not making eye contact. They may not get the same level of attention and developmental support as the second child. Why? Because American culture tends to pay less attention to those who don't speak out. It is subtle, and often overlooked, but it is there. Is it ethical to provide the student who seems the most “engaged” with a higher level of engagement? Is it ethical to push away your doubts or uncomfortable feelings about teaching the student who seems “quiet?” Tough questions that must be answered if you are going to be an ethical leader.



What are the cultural norms that influence your communication with others? How do you feel about the examples? Do they resonate with you? Why or why not?

Ethical leadership can look different from leader to leader and organization to organization. That is why it is so important to keep ethics as a constant guide and learning tool!

The following ethical leadership commitment statements can assist you in navigating this complex concept:

- I will advocate for truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.
- I will support freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and respect.
- I will strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.
- I will promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to contribute to the well-being of families, colleagues and communities.
- I will promote communication messages of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of those I work with and serve.
- I will condemn communication that degrades individuals through distortion, intimidation, and coercion, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.
- I will commit to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.
- I will advocate for sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.
- I will accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences for my communication and expect the same of others.

- I will be trustworthy and offer and expect respect from those I work with and serve.

When we make a commitment to ethical leadership, we are acknowledging the complexity and “messiness” that comes with honoring diverse views, respecting each person, and doing the “right” thing. We know that we will make mistakes and learn about ourselves and others in the process.

Citations

Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment | NAEYC. (2011). NAEYC. <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/ethical-conduct>

This is where you can add appendices or other back matter.