

Early Childhood Educators  
of British Columbia

# Code of **ETHICS**



**ECEBC** | early childhood  
educators of BC

**Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC) wishes to gratefully acknowledge the Child Care Initiatives Fund (CCIF) for supporting this project.**

**The research and code development were conducted by Frances Ricks, PhD, and Sandra Griffin, MA, from the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria, British Columbia.**

**© Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia**

2774 East Broadway,  
Vancouver, BC V5M 1Y8  
Tel: (604) 709-6063  
Toll Free: 1-800-797-5602  
Fax: (604) 709-6077

**[www.ecebc.ca](http://www.ecebc.ca)**

Sixth edition, October 2008

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any means without written permission from the publisher.

ISBN: 0-9682222-3-4

Printed in Canada

# Introduction

## to the ECEBC Code of Ethics

**E**arly childhood educators work with one of society's most vulnerable groups—young children. The quality of the interactions between young children and their caregivers has a significant, enduring impact on the children's lives. The intimacy of the relationship and the potential that exists to do harm call for a commitment on the part of early childhood educators to the highest standards of ethical practice.

While individual children are the focus of the work done by early childhood educators, ethical practice extends beyond the child-educator relationship. Early childhood educators care for and educate young children while recognizing and supporting the nurturing and socializing responsibilities of the children's families. Early childhood educators accept their ethical obligations to the children and families they serve as both represent our society's future.

ECEBC recognizes its responsibility to promote ethical practices and attitudes on the part of early childhood educators. The following principles, explanations and standards of practice have been developed to help early childhood educators monitor their professional practice. They are intended to both guide educators and protect the children and families with whom they work. Professionalism creates additional ethical obligations to colleagues and to the profession.

## Structure and derivation of the Code

**T**his code articulates the principles and standards of practice endorsed by ECEBC. Members of ECEBC undertake, as a condition of membership in the association, to incorporate them into their practice. ECEBC advocates the voluntary acceptance of these principles and standards by all early childhood educators, both members and non-members.

### Structure

Eight ethical principles are presented. These principles are intended to guide early childhood educators in deciding what conduct is right and correct. Educators may use the principles to help them make decisions 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 an early childhood setting.

### Derivation

These ethical principles were agreed upon by the ECEBC after reviewing the literature on the topic of ethics, examining and evaluating the codes of ethics of various professions, and consulting a number of experts in the field of professional ethics. These principles reflect the core values of early childhood education practice which are addressed in the codes of ethics of professional organizations in other jurisdictions.

## When principles conflict

**A**ll eight principles are reflected in the ethical practice of early childhood educators. However, there will be circumstances in which the ethical principles will conflict and educators will face the dilemma of having to choose between conflicting principles. In these difficult situations it is recommended that early childhood educators carefully think through the likely consequences of giving each of the conflicting principles primacy. By evaluating the consequences it may become clear which principle ought to be given more weight.

ECEBC recognizes that the resolution of ethical dilemmas can be difficult. Educators are encouraged, if time permits, to consult with colleagues and obtain different perspectives on the problem. If this consultation does not clarify the best course of action, educators are encouraged to contact the Executive Director at the ECEBC office for guidance. Although the final decision will be made by the individual educator facing the ethical dilemma, consultation with others indicates a commitment to ethical practice.

## The principles of the Code

- Early childhood educators promote the health and well-being of all children.
- Early childhood educators use developmentally appropriate practices when working with all children.
- Early childhood educators demonstrate caring for all children in all aspects of their practice.
- Early childhood educators work in partnership with parents, supporting them in meeting their responsibilities to their children.
- Early childhood educators work in partnership with colleagues and other service providers in the community to support the well-being of families.
- Early childhood educators work in ways that enhance human dignity.
- Early childhood educators pursue, on an ongoing basis, the knowledge, skills and self-awareness needed to be professionally competent.
- Early childhood educators demonstrate integrity in all of their professional relationships.

## Early childhood educators **promote the health and well-being of all children.**

### **Explanation**

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

### **Implications for practice**

In adhering to this Principle, an early childhood educator would:

- Promote each child's health and well-being.
- Create and maintain safe and healthy environments for children.
- Foster all facets of children's development.
- Enhance each child's feelings of competence, independence and self-esteem.
- Refrain from in any way degrading, endangering, frightening or harming children.
- Act as an advocate on behalf of all children for public policies, programs and services that enhance their health and well-being.

## Early childhood educators **use developmentally appropriate practices when working with children.**

### **Explanation**

Early childhood educators 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. Early childhood educators implement programs and use guidance techniques that take into account the ages of the children and the individual variations in their development.

### **Implications for Practice**

In adhering to this Principle, an early childhood educator would:

- Consider cross-cultural variations in child development norms when assessing child development.
- Apply the knowledge that the stages of physical, social, emotional, moral and cognitive development within each child may be different.
- Determine where each child is on the various developmental continua and use that knowledge to create programs that allow for individual differences and preferences.
- Use developmentally appropriate methods and materials in working with children.

## Early childhood educators **demonstrate caring for children in all aspects of their practice.**

### **Explanation**

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

### **Implications for Practice**

In adhering to this Principle, and early childhood educator would:

- Responds appropriately to each child's expression of need.
- Provide children with experiences that build trust.
- Express warmth, appropriate affection and consideration for children, both verbally and non-verbally.
- Communicate to children a genuine interest in their activities, ideas, opinions and concerns.
- Support children as they experience different emotions and model acceptable ways of expressing emotions.

## Early childhood educators **work in partnership with parents, supporting them in meeting their responsibilities to their children.**

### **Explanation**

Early childhood educators 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. Early childhood educators complement and support parents as they carry out these responsibilities. Through positive, respectful relationships with parents, early childhood educators are able to advance the well-being of children.

### **Implications for practice**

In adhering to this Principle, an early childhood educator would:

- Promote considerate relationships with the parents of the children in care.
- Respect the rights of parents to transmit their values, beliefs and cultural heritage to their children.
- Provide parents with knowledge, skills and support that will enhance their ability to nurture their children.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for parents to participate actively in all aspects of planning and decision making affecting their children.

**Early childhood educators work in partnership with colleagues and other service providers to support the well-being of families.**

**Explanation**

Early childhood educators recognize that nurturing family environments benefit children. Early childhood educators work with other helping professionals to provide a network of support for families.

**Implications for Practice**

In adhering to this Principle, an early childhood educator would:

- Support and encourage families by developing programs which meet the needs of those families being served.
- Assist families in obtaining needed specialized services provided by other professionals.
- Advocate public policies and community services that are supportive of families.

## Early childhood educators **work in ways that enhance human dignity.**

### **Explanation**

Early childhood educators 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.

### **Implications for Practice**

In adhering to this Principle, an early childhood educator would:

- Communicate respect by practicing and promoting anti-bias interactions.
- Support and promote the dignity of self and others by engaging in mutually enhancing relationships.
- Plan programs that communicate respect for diversity regarding ability, culture, gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and family composition.
- Provide opportunities for all children to participate in childhood activities.

Early childhood educators **pursue, on an ongoing basis, the knowledge, skills and self-awareness needed to be professionally competent.**

### **Explanation**

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

### **Implications for Practice**

In adhering to this Principle, an early childhood educator would:

- Recognize the need for continuous learning.
- Pursue professional development opportunities.
- Incorporate into practice current information from the early childhood education professional literature.
- Assess personal and professional strengths and limitations and undertake self-improvement.
- Articulate a personal philosophy on the basis of theoretical perspectives.

## Early childhood educators **demonstrate integrity in all their professional relationships.**

### **Explanation**

Early childhood educators are truthful and trust-worthy. Early childhood educators communicate honestly and openly, and endeavour to be accurate and objective. Early childhood educators 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 children, or as required by law. Early childhood educators acknowledge real or potential conflicts of interest and act in accordance with principles of the code.

### **Implications for Practice**

In adhering to this Principle, an early childhood educator would:

- Communicate with children, parents, colleagues and other professionals in an honest, straightforward manner.
- Conscientiously carry out professional responsibilities and duties.
- Identify personal values and beliefs, and strive to be objective.
- Treat as confidential information concerning children, families and colleagues unless failure to disclose would put children at risk.
- Recognize the potential for real or perceived conflict of interest and act in accordance with the principles of the code where dual relationships with colleagues of families exist and/or develop.

## **Provincially licensed early childhood educators...**

- **have specialized college training and adhere to a code of ethics.**
- **hold individual “Licenses to Practice” issued by the provincial government.**
- **consider children’s developmental ages and stages in every facet of their work.**
- **hold a core value of the importance of play in children’s natural development.**
- **promote quality early childhood education.**
- **work in provincially licensed and regulated, community-based child care programs, preschools, Strong Start programs and other related programs.**



**ECEBC** | early childhood  
educators of BC  
**STANDING STRONG TOGETHER**

**Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC) has been advancing early childhood care and education since 1969. We educate the sector and the broader community about the importance of early care and learning. We provide professional development opportunities to early childhood educators across the province.**



**[www.ecebc.ca](http://www.ecebc.ca)**