



Professionalism

Understanding the NQF Code of Ethics in our practice and interactions.

Early Childhood Australia has produced a Code of Ethics, which is one of the core documents underpinning the National Quality Framework. If the National Quality Framework is a series of guidelines, the Code of Ethics supports educators to critique practice and contextualise the guidelines the National Quality Framework provides.

The Code of Ethics guides our practice as professionals, and supports us to make decisions through a professional lens.

How do you, as a professional, achieve the following?

In relation to myself as a professional, I will:

1. Base my work on contemporary perspectives on research, theory, content knowledge, high-quality early childhood practices and my understandings of the children and families with whom I work.
2. Regard myself as a learner who undertakes reflection, critical self-study, continuing professional development and engages with contemporary theory and practice.
3. Seek and build collaborative professional relationships.
4. Acknowledge the power dimensions within professional relationships.
5. Act in ways that advance the interests and standing of my profession.
6. Work within the limits of my professional role and avoid misrepresentation of my professional competence and qualifications.
7. Mentor other early childhood professionals and students.
8. Advocate in relation to issues that impact on my profession and on young children and their families.
9. Encourage qualities and practices of leadership within the early childhood profession.

Check in with yourself and others about your journey as a professional. Seek feedback, and be open to critically reflecting on your practice.

Why is professionalism important?

Viewing ourselves, and conducting ourselves, as professionals elevates not only us as individuals, but the status of the Early Childhood Education and Care sector as a whole. Have you ever heard phrases like “Oh! Playing with babies all day! What a fun job!” or “Oh, so you’re a babysitter?” Reflecting on where those phrases might come from is important. Do we advocate for our professional selves in the political arena? Do we support and mentor other educators to grow as professionals? Does our way of writing, speaking and dressing reflect the values we have about the career we have chosen?

What can we do to be more professional?

The guidelines provided above from ECA offer an excellent starting point to explore what professional behaviour, practice and learning looks, sounds and feels like. We can consider the following questions and reflection points also:

- Who do I admire as a professional within the ECEC sector? What do I admire about this person – is it their advocacy? Their leadership skills? Are they a life-long learner?
- How am I involved within the sector, outside of my day to day work? What do I do to advocate for children’s rights?
- What do I do to build collaborative professional relationships? Do I work with other agencies? How are our conversations supportive of children and families?

How can we weave professionalism into our every day practice?

Consider the language we use when we speak to children, parents, families and the community – language sends a powerful message. There is a difference between, “Charlie had difficulty managing his emotions today but we spent time together and he joined the other children when he felt ready” and “Charlie was a cheeky monkey but he came good in the end.”

- Extend on our learning – bring new ideas and resources to share with the staff team – this isn't just the role of the educational leader. If you read something interesting in the paper, bring it in to discuss. If you see a news item which gives you pause for thought, discuss it with your fellow educators.
- Check in with yourself and others about your journey as a professional. Seek feedback, and be open to critically reflecting on your practice.
- Engage with professional development, as an individual and as a member of a staff team. Engaging with professional development on a regular basis allows us an opportunity to reflect on ourselves, to gain a better understanding of our own point of view and our motivations.

References

Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments 2009. *Being, Belonging and Becoming The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, Canberra.

Early Childhood Australia, The Early Childhood Australia 2006 *Code of Ethics*, Canberra.

Further Resources

Establishing and Maintaining Multidisciplinary Teams in Early Childhood Settings (e-Booklet)



Multi-disciplinary teams are groups of professionals working together to achieve a common goal. In an early childhood context, these are discussed in terms of outcomes for children and families. Early childhood services that bring together a team of professionals from a variety of health and education disciplines are best suited to support children and families through challenging circumstances.
Cost: \$11

**For more information or to order resources call
(08) 823405219**

These sessions are scheduled in our program guide, and can also be delivered at your service.



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Professional Development with Gowrie SA

Below are professional learning opportunities that Gowrie SA offers that can support educators as they explore dimensions of professionalism.

Advanced Diploma of Community Sector Management

This qualification is ideal for professionals, leaders (Director, Assistant Director, Team Leaders) and educators who are responsible for coordination and leadership of an education and care service.

Professionalism

Exploring professionalism, developing a professional culture and identity, leading with integrity, understanding accountability, critical analysis of situations, ethical leadership, codes of conduct, complexities of ethical issues and the need for analysis, professional culture and critical reflection.

Code of Conduct

Understand the requirements of the NQF to have a code of conduct that guides practice, why we need a code of conduct and how this impacts on the culture of the centre. Also understanding the responsibilities of educators and staff engaging with the Code of Conduct

Reflective Practice: Let's Reengage and Reexamine

Continuously engaging in critical reflection, both as individuals and as teams, maintains ownership of what we do and why we do it. This session will explore the importance of critical reflection. Reflective strategies will be used to unpack and discuss our own personal and professional values and beliefs and how these translate into service philosophies, practices and documentation.

Leading Professional Teams in OSHC

This 3 part series is for OSHC Directors and Leaders and aims to support building a professional culture with all staff in the OSHC team. There are three themes explored through this series: leading a professional team, managing conflict and performance management.

Leading the Learning Frameworks in FDC

This 2 part leadership module supports Family Day Care Coordinators and Managers to understand the learning frameworks and identify strategies to support educators to put them into practice. The module is practical and provides tools and strategies to use across your FDC scheme.



To register for sessions

Visit www.gowriesa.org.au/register-training

or scan the QR code to go directly to the registration page on the Gowrie SA website.