



## **ETHICS OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE PROFESSIONALS<sup>1</sup>**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **CHILD AND YOUTH CARE - THE PROFESSION**

North American Child and Youth Care has been developing as a profession. "Characteristic of professions are; a systematic body of theory, professional authority, sanction of the community, a regulative code of ethics and a professional culture" (Greenwood, 1957). North American Child and Youth Care has progressed in these areas. Ethics is the focus of this presentation.

The International Child and Youth Care Consortium developed a "Description of the Field" which has become widely adopted (NOCCWA, 1992, p. 83). The profession aims to address, as much as possible, the psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and biological needs of young people and their families. This may occur at different life stages or in a variety of circumstances. In multidisciplinary settings, as in mandated agencies, the profession is central in the care, custody and treatment of youth. Child and Youth Care centers on the client and utilizes skills and techniques which actualize the processes of development and change. It includes the necessary advocacy for youngsters and their families in powerless and often hopeless situations. It captures the root value of "caring" as an underlying factor and force vital in emotional growth, rehabilitation, social competence and treatment.

The ethics, norms and knowledge base of Child and Youth Care constitute the professional culture which is a source of identity for all who participate in the profession. The shared symbols and values bring together educators, direct care workers and administrators. Practice and research are articulated and validated in the journals and literature of the profession. The profession's values underlie the mission and management of Child and Youth caring organizations, employers and the professional associations.

The development of a North American Code of Ethics for Child and Youth Care is a benchmark for the profession. The Code of Ethics unites the range of professional roles and functions and relates them to common commitments and shared responsibilities. The Code of Ethics establishes a framework to guide thinking and practice for all Child and Youth Care Professionals.

#### **References**

Greenwood, E. (1957). Attributes of a profession, *Social Work*, 3, 2, pp. 44-55.

NOCCWA (1992). The international leadership coalition for professional child and youth care: Milwaukee, 1992, *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*, 8, pp. 69-83.

<sup>1</sup> This document was adopted by the National Organization of Child Care Worker Associations (NOCCWA) and has been circulated by the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations.

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## **CURRENT DESCRIPTION OF THE FIELD**

Professional Child and Youth Care Practice focuses on infants, children, and adolescents, both normal and with special needs, within the context of the family, the community, and the life span. The developmental-ecological perspective emphasizes the interaction between persons and their physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings.

Professional practitioners promote the optimal development of children, youth, and their families in a variety of settings, such as early care and education, community-based child and youth development programs, parent education and family support, school-based programs, community mental health, group homes, residential centers, day and residential treatment, early intervention, home-based care and treatment, psychiatric centers, rehabilitation programs, pediatric health care, and juvenile justice programs.

Child and youth care practice includes assessing client and program needs, designing and implementing programs and planned environments, integrating developmental, preventive, and therapeutic requirements into the life space, contributing to the development of knowledge and practice, and participating in systems interventions through direct care, supervision, administration, teaching, research, consultation, and advocacy.

(Adopted by: Academy of Child and Youth Care Professionals, Child and Youth Care Education Consortium, International Leadership Coalition for Professional Child and Youth Care, and the National Organization of Child Care Worker Associations - with an editorial revision.)

(Note: The following editorial change has been suggested. In the first sentence omit the word "normal" and change to read:

Professional Child and Youth Care Practice focuses on infants, children, and adolescents, including those with special needs, within the context of the family, the community, and the life span.)

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## **CODE OF ETHICS**

### **STANDARDS FOR PRACTICE OF NORTH AMERICAN CHILD AND YOUTH CARE PROFESSIONALS**

International Leadership Coalition of Professional Child and Youth Care  
June 1995

#### **Preamble**

Professional Child and Youth Care is committed to promoting the well being of children, youth, and families in a context of respect and collaboration. This commitment is carried out in a variety of settings and with a broad range of roles including direct practice, supervision, administration, teaching and training, research, consultation, and advocacy. In the course of practice Child and Youth Care Professionals encounter many situations which have ethical dimensions and implications.

As Child and Youth Care Professionals we are aware of, and sensitive to, the responsibilities involved in our practice. Each professional has the responsibility to strive for high standards of professional conduct. This includes a commitment to the centrality of ethical concerns for Child and Youth Care practice, concern with

one's own professional conduct, encouraging ethical behavior by others, and consulting with others on ethical issues.

This ethical statement is a living document, always a work in progress, which will mature and clarify as our understanding and knowledge grow. The principles represent values deeply rooted in our history, to which there is a common commitment. They are intended to serve as guidelines for conduct and to assist in resolving ethical questions. For some dilemmas, the principles provide specific or significant guidance. In other instances, the Child and Youth Care Professional is required to combine the guidance of the principles with sound professional judgment and consultation. In any situation, the course of action chosen is expected to be consistent with the spirit and intent of the principles.

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## **PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS**

### **I. RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELF:**

#### **A. Maintains competency.**

1. Takes responsibility for identifying, developing, and fully utilizing knowledge and abilities for professional practice.
2. Obtains training, education, supervision, experience and/or counsel to assure competent service.

#### **B. Maintains high standards of professional conduct.**

#### **C. Maintains physical and emotional well-being.**

1. Aware of own values and their implication for practice.
2. Aware of self as a growing and strengthening professional.

### **II. RESPONSIBILITY TO THE CLIENT <sup>2</sup>**

#### **A. Above all, shall not harm the child, youth or family.**

1. Does not participate in practices that are disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitive, intimidating, psychologically damaging, or physically harmful to clients.

#### **B. Provides expertise and protection.**

1. Recognizes, respects, and advocates for the rights of the child, youth and family.

#### **C. Recognizes that professional responsibility is to the client and advocates for the client's best interest**

#### **D. Ensures that services are sensitive to and non-discriminatory of clients regardless of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, national ancestry, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, abilities, mental or physical handicap, medical condition, political belief, political affiliation, socioeconomic status.**

1. Obtains training, education, supervision, experience, and/or counsel to assure competent service.

**E. Recognizes and respects the expectations and life patterns of clients.**

1. Designs individualized programs of child, youth and family care to determine and help meet the psychological, physical, social, cultural and spiritual needs of the clients.

2. Designs programs of child, youth, and family care which address the child's developmental status, understanding, capacity, and age.

**F. Recognizes that there are differences in the needs of children, youth and families.**

1. Meets each client's needs on an individual basis.

2. Considers the implications of acceptance for the child, other children, and the family when gratuities or benefits are offered from a child, youth or family.

**G. Recognizes that competent service often requires collaboration. Such service is a cooperative effort drawing upon the expertise of many.**

1. Administers medication prescribed by the lawful prescribing practitioner in accordance with the prescribed directions and only for medical purposes. Seeks consultation when necessary.

2. Refers the client to other professionals and/or seeks assistance to ensure appropriate services.

3. Observes, assesses, and evaluates services/treatments prescribed or designed by other professionals.

**H. Recognizes the client's membership within a family and community, and facilitates the participation of significant others in service to the client.**

**I. Fosters client self determination.**

**J. Respects the privacy of clients and holds in confidence information obtained in the course of professional service.**

**K. Ensures that the boundaries between professional and personal relationships with clients is explicitly understood and respected, and that the practitioner's behavior is appropriate to this difference.**

1. Sexual intimacy with a client, or the family member of a client, is unethical.

**III. RESPONSIBILITY TO THE EMPLOYER/EMPLOYING ORGANIZATION:**

**A. Treats colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith.**

**B. Relates to the clients of colleagues with professional consideration.**

**C. Respects the commitments made to the employer/employing organization.**

**IV. RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:**

**A. Recognizes that in situations of professional practice the standards in this code shall guide the resolution of ethical conflicts.**

**B. Promotes ethical conduct by members of the profession.**

1. Seeks arbitration or mediation when conflicts with colleagues require consultation and if an informal resolution seems appropriate.

2. Reports ethical violations to appropriate persons and/or bodies when an informal resolution is not appropriate.

**C. Encourages collaborative participation by professionals, client, family and community to share responsibility for client outcomes.**

**D. Ensures that research is designed, conducted, and reported in accordance with high quality Child and Youth Care practice, and recognized standards of scholarship, and research ethics.**

**E. Ensures that education and training programs are competently designed and delivered.**

1. Programs meet the requirements/claims set forth by the program.

2. Experiences provided are properly supervised.

**F. Ensures that administrators and supervisors lead programs in high quality and ethical practice in relation to clients, staff, governing bodies, and the community.**

1. Provides support for professional growth.

2. Evaluates staff on the basis of performance on established requirements.

## **V. RESPONSIBILITY TO SOCIETY:**

**A. Contributes to the profession in making services available to the public.**

**B. Promotes understanding and facilitates acceptance of diversity in society.**

**C. Demonstrates the standards of this Code with students and volunteers.**

**D. Encourages informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions.**

<sup>2</sup>Client is defined as the child, family, and former clients.

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**CODES REVIEWED PRIOR TO DRAFTING**

**Child and Youth Care**

Child Care Association of Pennsylvania: Statement on Ethical Standards  
Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations: Code of Ethics  
D.C. Association of Youth and Child Care Workers: Code of Ethics  
Illinois Association of Child Care Workers: Code of Ethics  
Maryland Association of Child Care Workers: Code of Ethics  
(New York) Association of Child Care Workers, Inc. : Ethical Standards of Child Care Worker  
National Organization of Child Care Worker Associations: Basic Philosophy  
Oregon Child and Youth Care Association: Ethical Principles of Child and Youth Care Practice  
Quebec Association of Child Care Workers: Code of Ethics (Professional Standards for Practice)  
Texas Youth & Child Care Worker Association: Statement of Basic Philosophy  
Wisconsin Association of Child Care Workers: Code of Ethics

## **Codes of Related Organizations**

American Personnel and Guidance Association: Ethical Standards (revised 1974)  
American Psychological Association: Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (1992)  
Boy's Clubs Professional Association: Code of Ethics, Oath of Service  
British Columbia Psychological Association: Ethical Standards of Psychologists (1985)  
Canadian Association of Social Workers: Code of Ethics (1983)  
Canadian Nurses Association: Code of Ethics for Nursing  
Canadian Psychological Association: A Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists

Child Life Council : Standards of Clinical Practice, Code of Ethical Responsibility for Child Life Council Members, and Child Life Philosophic Base

Coalition of Adult Education Organizations (CAEO): Guidelines for Developing and Implementing a Code of Ethics for Adult Educators

Council for Exceptional Children: Code of Ethics  
Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia: Code of Ethics

Ministry of Health and Social Services (Quebec): Protocol on the Minimal Guarantee of Protection for Youth With Adjustment Difficulties in the Network of Treatment Centres (June, 1988)

National Association for the Education of Young Children: Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment

National Association of Social Workers  
S.Y.C.: Code of Ethics (draft)  
U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (Adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on Nov. 20, 1989)  
United Nations' Principles of the 1994 International Year of the Family

Ville Marie Child and Youth Protection Centre, Shawbridge Youth Centres, Youth Horizons, and Mount St. Patrick Youth Center: Statement of Principles to Govern Standards for Practices and Conduct with Respect to Users (April 26, 1993)

Virginia Association for Youth and Child Care Education: Statement of Ethical Standards

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## **Draft Committee for the International Leadership Coalition for Professional Child and Youth Care**

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## **ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION**

### **A Beginning List**

As our Child and Youth Care professional community proceeds with ethics work there are many issues which we must discuss and clarify. A beginning list has been generated in the work of drafting this document. Please keep them in mind and also identify additional issues which should be added for our attention.

How do we meet spiritual needs ?

Should there be a standard related to a client's right to learn from success and failure?

How can a strong developmental perspective be included?

It is critical to describe the limits of confidentiality, e.g. subpoenas, funding sources, risk to client or others, danger to self and others.

How do we define client, what is the time period?

What action is necessary if conflicts arise between these ethics and employer/employing organization policies and/or practices?

What are the conflict of interest issues?

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**This document has been edited upon learning its web presence was ended. This document recognizes the work and contribution to the field of child and youth care by Martha A.**

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