



# ETHICS MODULE



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



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**This Project (Vet for EI - 2017-1-TR01-KA202-046189) has been funded by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union. However, European Commission and Turkish National Agency cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.**

## ▶ WHAT ARE ETHICS

### Morals

- ▶ Concerned with or relating to **human behaviour**, especially the distinction between **good and bad** or **right and wrong** behaviour.
- ▶ Based on a **sense of right and wrong** according to **conscience**.
- ▶ Morals: principles of behaviours in accordance with standards of right and wrong.

### Ethics

- ▶ Philosophical study of the **moral value** of human conduct and of the **rules and principles** that ought to govern it.
- ▶ A social, religious or civil **code of behaviour** considered **correct**, esp. that of a particular group, profession, or individual.

## ► Children's rights



Source: Getty Images

- Children of all ages with a disability share universal rights with all people, and share the additional rights of all children as identified in the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC).
- The specific rights of children with a disability are expressed in the **United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (UN, 2006)**. Among other international statements, the **UNESCO Salamanca statement (UNESCO, 1994)** on inclusive education recognises the importance of inclusion of children with a disability in mainstream education.

## ► Children's rights and legislation

- **The United Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** stipulates that children have rights to non-discrimination, to have their best interests considered, to receive guidance from adults, to express a view, to have their views given due consideration/weight and to be safe. Strong support for children's involvement and participation and rights is explicitly stated in sections of Articles 12, 13, 14 and 15 of the CRC: In particular:
- **Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child):** When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.
- **Article 13 (freedom of expression):** Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive information of any kind as long as it is within the law.
- For professionals, this means that children share power and responsibility for decision making, children are involved in decision making processes, children's views are taken into account and they are supported in expressing their views. This might include involvement in the design of interventions, the criteria for the success of interventions and the timing/location and method of delivery of interventions.

## ► Dilemmas and tensions



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Ethical considerations are integral to our professional lives when we are faced with difficult choices regarding services and supports for children and families.

Often, the right choice in service delivery for young children with disabilities ages birth to 5 years is unclear due to a myriad of factors potentially creating ethical dilemmas.

The provision of family-centered services\* sometimes can be difficult when the priorities and obligations of parents and service providers are in **conflict** (Able, West and Lim, 2017).

\* The principles of family centred practices are discussed in another module

## ► Dilemmas and tensions

According to Able, West and Lim (2017), potential areas in which ethical issues may occur include professional values, priorities, and beliefs influencing the provision of family-centered care , family empowerment or informed consent , and home visiting . In addition, other ethical conflicts could occur regarding:

- (a) the identification and placement of children who are English language learners in special education and the degree of parent involvement in the process;
- (b) abuse and neglect of children with disabilities; and
- (c) the use of alternative therapeutic approaches with little or no scientific or evidence-based research to support them .

The aforementioned factors can interfere with evidence-based family-centered service delivery. An additional area that may produce ethical dilemmas is collaboration among professionals with different backgrounds, experiences, and priorities.

## ► Ethical codes

- The use of ethical codes for professionals are recommended to reduce conflict and guide resolution of such conflict to ensure best outcomes for children and families (Able, West and Lim, 2017).
- Therefore a number of ethical principles and codes are discussed in this module.



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## Ethical principals

Guiding principles that are particularly relevant to the inclusion of young children with a disability in ECI. They provide a framework for assessing policies, services and actions.

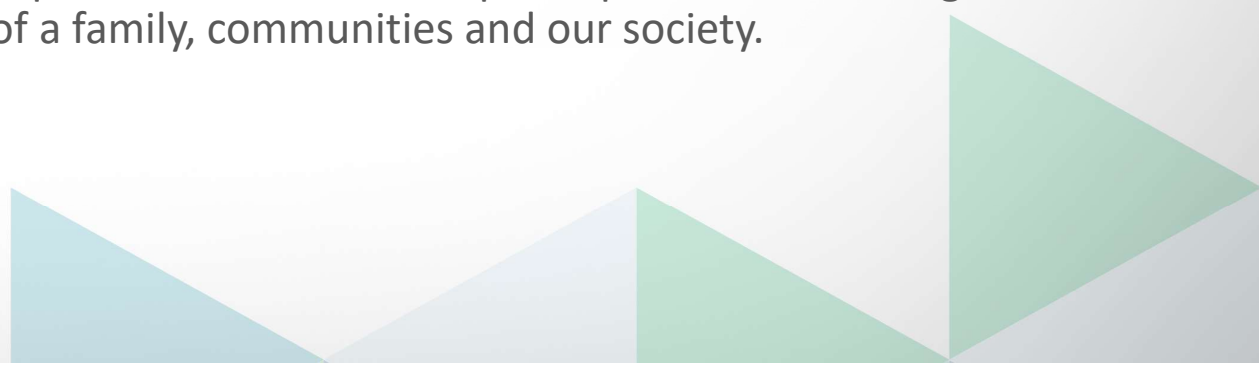
### **Best interests of the child**

- In all actions concerning children, the rights and best interests of the child are paramount, and young children's healthy development, learning and wellbeing must be a priority for society.

### **Importance of families**

- Children's growth and learning occurs mainly in the context of their primary relationships in their families; and partnerships between ECEC, support professionals and families are essential.

### **Social inclusion**

- Every child has the capacity to make a unique contribution and to participate in a wide range of activities and contexts as a full member of a family, communities and our society.
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- A series of overlapping triangles in shades of blue and green at the bottom of the slide.



## Ethical principals (continued)

Guiding principles that are particularly relevant to the inclusion of young children with a disability in ECI. They provide a framework for assessing policies, services and actions.

### **Diversity**

- Diversity and difference are valuable in their own right, as are the commonalities among people. Understanding the practices, values, beliefs and cultures of families and acknowledging difference is fundamental.

### **Equity**

- Equity requires that each child receives the support and resources needed to participate, engage and succeed.

### **High expectations for every child**

- All children have the capacity to succeed, regardless of diverse circumstances and abilities. Children progress well when they, their families, early childhood educators and support professionals have high expectations for their achievement in learning and development.

### **Evidence-based practice**

- Evidence-based practice in ECEC programs is informed by the knowledge and experience of educators and families as well as findings from current research.

## ► An example of ethical principles



Source: Getty Images

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9iP5z6nZoM#action=share>
- (Available in English)

## ▶ The early childhood intervention professions

Inclusion of children with a disability requires collaboration between the different professionals in the early childhood intervention fields to achieve the best outcomes for children. This includes:

- leaders at all levels in the sectors working to build positive attitudes, beliefs and values about inclusion in their professional communities.
- ECI professionals working together to develop shared knowledge, common language and mutually supportive practice.
- strengthening the contribution made by all members of the team, particularly focusing on:
- the child as a contributor to their own and others' learning.
- family members as significant partners in their child's learning and as informed decision makers in supporting their child's ongoing education and care.
- cooperation between ECI professionals in adapting curriculum and providing additional resources, based on children's and families' strengths and according to need.
- support for effective and positive transitions between and across settings for children and families.



## Service providers, educators and support professionals

Inclusion of children with a disability requires:

- program philosophies that reflect shared assumptions about inclusion, the valuing of diversity, collaboration and partnership and what constitutes high quality inclusive practices.
- interpersonal warmth and welcome for all families and children in their contacts with services/programs.
- programs that acknowledge each child's strengths, meet each child's specific needs and abilities and support the active participation and engagement of all children.
- intentional teaching that is interactive, purposeful and thoughtful and recognises the individual needs of each child.
- environments that support meaningful positive relationships and friendships with peers and other adults.
- recognition of and support for parents' advocacy for their child.

## ▶ Governments, organisations and institutions

Including children with a disability requires support from governments, organisations and institutions to build strong foundations for families to support children's learning, development and wellbeing. This requires that governments, organisations and institutions acknowledge publicly the importance of children's services that practice high quality inclusion for all children and implement a systems approach to inclusion at all levels, including:

- service and funding systems that are easy for families and service providers to navigate.
- readily available, accurate and comprehensive information about disabilities and related services for families.
- information for the community that breaks down attitudinal barriers.
- full access to physical environments in services and the broader community.
- easy access to high quality inclusive ECI services and programs across all service types and settings.
- ready availability of additional educators, inclusion support facilitators and other support professionals.
- a stable and skilled ECI workforce with relevant skills, knowledge and access to ongoing professional development and support.
- the introduction of national and state accountability systems that monitor increases in the number of children with a disability enrolled in inclusive programs, improvement in the quality of inclusive practices and improvements in the outcomes for children with a disability in ECI settings.

## ► ETHICAL PRINCIPLES: Centre for Research in Early Childhood, UK

Ethical principles are set out with the intention of encouraging professionals to work in the spirit of aspiring to achieve these high ethical expectations within all aspects of their work, whilst acknowledging that realising all aspects is very challenging and difficult. Early Intervention professionals researchers should have an ethic of respect for:

1. the child, family, community and society;
2. democratic values;
3. justice and equity;
4. knowing from multiple perspectives;
5. integrity, transparency and respectful interactions;
6. quality and rigour;
7. academic scholarship;
8. interprofessional practice;
9. disciplinary expertise.



Source: Getty Images

# Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics



## **I. IN RELATION TO CHILDREN, I WILL:**

1. View each child firstly as a child (irrespective of abilities or disabilities).
2. Value the unique abilities of each child and maintain an openness to each child's ability to achieve.
3. Acknowledge each child's needs as a human being and the needs that result from their particular developmental challenges.
4. Acknowledge the major role of play in development and be sensitive to children's right to play, their need for stimulation, enjoyment, choice and preferences.
5. Interact with children in ways that enhance their development and competencies and value their achievements.
6. Identify, value and build upon each child's competencies.
7. Advocate on behalf of children.
8. Acknowledge parents are the first educators of their children.

## Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics



### **I. IN RELATION TO CHILDREN, I WILL:**

8. Advocate for the abilities and strengths of each child irrespective of diagnosis and/or prognosis.
9. Create and maintain safe, healthy and stimulating environments that optimise children's well-being and development.
10. Assist children to learn to interact and communicate effectively.
11. Base my work with children on sound theoretical and practical knowledge as well as on individual knowledge of each child's development and additional needs.
12. Respect the special relationship between children and their families and incorporate this understanding in all my interactions with children.
13. Work to ensure that young children are not discriminated against on the basis of ability, diagnosis, label, gender, age, race, religion, language, culture, or national origin.
14. Acknowledge the worth of the cultural and linguistic diversity that children and families possess and adapt practices accordingly.
15. Engage only in practices that are respectful of and provide security for children and in no way degrade, endanger, exploit, intimidate or harm them.
16. Ensure that my practices reflect consideration of the child's perspective.
17. Act on behalf of children to protect their physical and emotional wellbeing in including making protective notifications when necessary.

## ► Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics

### II. IN RELATION TO FAMILIES, I WILL:

1. Develop collaborative partnerships with families respecting carer and family expertise about the children and share my professional knowledge and understanding sensitively.
2. Work to develop positive relationships with families that are based on mutual trust and open communication.
3. Seek to engage in shared decision making with families.
4. Work to support and complement the family in its child rearing.
5. Acknowledge and respect families' existing strengths and competencies.
12. Provide families with full and unbiased information to enable them to make informed decisions.
13. Convey information to caregivers in a direct, transparent and sensitive manner.
14. Value and encourage mutual support between caregivers, families and the community.

## ► Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics

### II. IN RELATION TO FAMILIES, I WILL:

6. Acknowledge and respect the uniqueness of each family, and the significance of its culture, customs, language, beliefs, and the community context in which it operates.
7. Acknowledge and respect different family compositions.
8. Consider each family's perspective, especially when their views differ from mine.
9. Assist each family to develop a sense of trust and connection to the services in which their children participate.
10. Respect each family's right to be involved in the services available at the level they choose.
11. Maintain confidentiality, and respect each family's right to privacy.

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## III. IN RELATION TO COLLEAGUES AND STAFF TEAMS, I WILL:

1. Make every effort to communicate effectively.
2. Work to build an atmosphere of professional trust, respect and candour.
3. Acknowledge and support the use of the personal and professional strengths that my colleagues bring to the workplace.
4. Support and assist colleagues in their professional development.
5. Acknowledge the worth of the cultural and linguistic diversity that my colleagues bring to the workplace.

## Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics



### **III. IN RELATION TO COLLEAGUES AND STAFF TEAMS, I WILL:**

6. Respect the perspectives that different disciplines bring to the understanding of the needs of each child, family, service and community.
7. Create a climate of effective teamwork and consultation.
8. Work to maintain and improve the standard of service provided in my work place.
9. Promote policies and working conditions that are nondiscriminatory and that foster competence, well-being and positive self-esteem.
10. Maintain appropriate confidentiality.
11. Encourage my colleagues to accept and adhere to this Code.

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### **IV. IN RELATION TO THE COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY, I WILL:**

1. Ensure services are responsive to community needs.
2. Support the development and implementation of laws and policies that promote the wellbeing of children and families and that are responsive to community needs.
3. Be familiar with and abide by laws and policies that relate to my work.
4. Work to promote laws and policies that enhance the wellbeing of children.
5. Promote cooperation among all agencies and professions working in the best interests of children and families.
6. Promote children's best interest through community education and advocacy.
7. Support continuous service evaluation and accountability to clients and the community.

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Source: Getty Images

### **V. IN RELATION TO MYSELF AS A PROFESSIONAL, I WILL:**

1. Update, and continue to improve my expertise and practice in the early childhood intervention field through formal and informal professional development.
2. Engage in critical self-reflection and seek input from colleagues and others.
3. Communicate with and consider the views of all my colleagues.
4. Initiate and support research to strengthen and expand the knowledge base of early childhood intervention.
5. Work within the limits of my professional role and avoid misrepresentation of my professional competence and qualifications.
6. Be an advocate for young children, services, education and therapies, and early childhood intervention.

## ► References

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