



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 the profession, I will:

- base my work on research, theories, content knowledge, practice evidence and my understanding of the children and families with whom I work
- take responsibility for articulating my professional values, knowledge and practice and the positive contribution our profession makes to society
- engage in critical reflection, ongoing professional learning and support research that builds my knowledge and that of the profession
- work within the scope of my professional role and avoid misrepresentation of my professional competence and qualifications
- encourage qualities and practices of ethical leadership within the profession
- model quality practice and provide constructive feedback and assessment for students as aspiring professionals

- mentor new graduates by supporting their induction into the profession
- advocate for my profession and the provision of quality education and care.

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?

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