

Ethical Thinking and Practice for Parent & Family Educators



Step 1: Identify important relationships in the situation using the practitioner role as the primary focal point.

- ◆ *What is the relational field? What are all the possible relationships that the practitioner needs to consider?*
- ◆ *What is the primary caring relationship the educator needs to address in this case?*

Step 2: Application of principles: Look over the list of Ethical Principles (that follows) that apply to this kind of relationship. Decide which principles may be relevant to guiding behavior in this situation. Are there any additional principles that might apply? Which are the three to four principles most relevant to understand this case? Why?

Step 3: What are some of the potential contradictions between the principles?

Step 4: Application of virtues: Consider the virtues (caring, prudence, hope/optimism). Which is most relevant? Are all relevant to some degree? Why? Spend some time alone to consider virtues before discussing in small groups.

Step 5: Brainstorm possible actions by the family educators, keeping in mind the relationship, the relevant principles and the virtues.

Select one to act upon or do. Ethics to be successful has to move from an abstract level to a practical level that speaks to practitioners' concerns. Parent and family educators who work with fathers have extended practice to include all family members and diverse family systems. This extension of practice has exposed practitioners to new ethical issues that should be approached in a thoughtful, direct manner. The support and insight of a larger group of practitioners is necessary to move the field forward and improve practice. The ideas outlined in this article provide some next steps in the long term process.

Ethical Principles —

Relationships with Parents & Families

1. We will be aware of the impact/power we have on parents and family relationships.
2. We will strive to understand families as complex, interactive systems where parents have the primary responsibility as educators, nurturers, and limit-setters for children.
3. We will respect cultural beliefs, backgrounds and differences and engage in practice that is sensitive to the diversity of child-rearing values and goals.
4. We will help parents recognize their strengths and work with parents to set goals for themselves and their children.
5. We will respect and accept parents for who they are, recognizing their development and circumstances.
6. We will support and challenge parents to continue to grow and learn about parenting and their child's development.
7. We will communicate respectfully and clearly with family members.
8. We will communicate openly and truthfully about the nature and extent of services provided.
9. We will support diverse family values by acknowledging and examining alternative parenting practices to support healthy family relationships.
10. We will include parents as partners in problem solving and decision making related to program design and implementation.
11. We will be proactive in stating program child guidance principles and discipline guidelines and encourage non-violent child-rearing.

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12. We will create data privacy and confidentially guidelines respectful of family members and protective of their legal rights.
13. We will provide a program environment that is safe and nurturing to all family members.
14. We will ensure that all family members have access to and are encouraged to participate in family education.

Other:

Relationships with Children

1. We will treat children with respect and sensitivity to their needs and rights as developing persons.
2. We will strive to understand children in the context of their families.
3. We will do no harm to children and insist on the same from others.
4. We will advocate for children and their best interests at the same time that we work with the parents/adults in the family.
5. We will provide environments that are respectful of children and sensitive to their developmental and individual needs.
6. We will support the right of all children to have access to quality education, health, and community resources.

Other:

Relationships with Colleagues & the Profession

1. We will value and promote diversity in staff.
2. We will provide staff with policies and support systems for addressing difficult situations with family members, colleagues and others.

3. We will follow data privacy policies that meet legal standards and are based upon respect for family members.
4. We will follow the mandatory reporting of abusive family behavior in a respectful and prudent manner.
5. We will define our role as family educators and practice within our level of competence.
6. We will recognize the difference between personal and professional values in our professional interactions.
7. We will support the ongoing development of a knowledge base that guides us toward ethical and effective practice.
8. We will be committed to ongoing training and professional development to enhance our knowledge and skills.

Other:

Relationships with Community/Society

1. We will be knowledgeable about community resources and make and accept informed, appropriate referrals.
2. We will be aware of the boundaries of our practice and know when to use other community resources for the benefit of family members.
3. We will communicate clearly and cooperate with other programs/agencies in order to best meet family needs.
4. We will advocate for laws and policies that reflect our changing knowledge base and the best interests of parents, families, and communities.
5. We will respect and uphold laws and regulations that pertain to our practice as family educators and offer expertise to legal authorities based on professional knowledge.

Other:



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