

Heritage Code Conduct (Ethics)

Policy Number	2009/06
Approved by	Heritage Management Committee – April 2009; 12 March 2013; 8 August 2017
Last reviewed	July 2017
Next review due	2020
National Regulations	National Regulation 168 (2)(i)(i)(j). 155
National Quality Standard	Quality Areas 1, 4, 5, 6

Background

Heritage Early Childhood Centre Inc. (Heritage) understands early childhood services play an important role in the provision of services to the community and this places all educators and other staff members in a position of trust and responsibility. In addition, early childhood professionals have a significant influence on their relationships with children, families, colleagues and the community, therefore professional accountability is vital.

Ethical behavior is defined as a branch of philosophy that seeks to uphold moral values and:

- Is characterized by honesty, fairness and equity in interpersonal and professional relationships and in all activities.
- Respects the dignity, diversity and rights of individuals and groups of people.
- Is not biased and acts in ways that are consistent with commonly held moral values.

In the early childhood setting, ethical behaviour refers to acting in the best interests of all children and is based on mutual trust and open communication with families. It involves educators thinking about everyday actions and decision making, both individually and collectively, and responding with respect to all concerned. At Heritage, it requires all educators, other staff and families to support the Heritage philosophy, policies, standards and practices that are based on the principles of fairness and equity.

Heritage understands that a code of ethics is not intended to, and could not possibly provide easy answers, formulae, or prescriptive solutions for the complex problems early childhood professionals face in their work. Rather, the Heritage Code of Ethics is designed to be an aspirational document that sets out principles and expected standards of professional behaviour to inform individual and collective decision making by our educators and enrolled families when faced with difficult issues as they arise at Heritage, especially where there are conflicting obligations and responsibilities. It provides a framework for critical reflection about ethical responsibilities in the early childhood setting and reflects current community expectations and morality in Australia.

The Heritage Code of Ethics reflects the latest version of Early Childhood Australia's (ECA) Code of Ethics, published in 2016. The first ECA Code of Ethics for the Australian early childhood profession was developed by a national working party in 1988 with considerable input from early childhood professionals. It was updated in 2006 and 2014, and the current version was approved by the ECA National Board in February 2016.

Early childhood professionals have a strong history of advocating on behalf of children and their families and ECA's Code of Ethics 2016 builds on this tradition by making explicit the ethical and professional responsibility to take action in the face of injustice and when unethical

practice occurs. The Code also acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been nurturing and teaching children on this land for thousands of years and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional ways of being and caring for children. A significant change in the revised Code is the inclusion of a set of core principles that are viewed as the fundamental values underpinning the work of early childhood professionals given the specialist nature of their work.

Legislative Background

- Under National Regulation 168 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (ACT), Heritage is required to have policies and procedures in relation to staffing, including a code of conduct for staff members.
- The ECA's Code of Ethics is based on the principles of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991)* and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)*.
- The 2016 version is the first to reflect the National Quality Framework and National Quality Standard, ensuring the Code of Ethics promotes inclusive practice. **Refer to Appendix 1: Relevant National Regulations and Quality Standards.**

Core Principles

The following core principles guide decision making at Heritage in relation to ethical responsibilities, ensuring the protection and wellbeing of children is paramount. They require a commitment to respect and maintain the rights and dignity of children, families, colleagues and communities.

Heritage Code of Ethics Core Principles

- Each child has unique interests and strengths and the capacity to contribute to their communities.
- Children are citizens from birth with civil, cultural, linguistic, social and economic rights.
- Effective learning and teaching is characterised by professional decisions that draw on specialised knowledge and multiple perspectives.
- Partnerships with families and communities support shared responsibility for children's learning, development and wellbeing.
- Democratic, fair and inclusive practices promote equity and a strong sense of belonging.
- Respectful, responsive and reciprocal relationships are central to children's education and care.
- Play and leisure are essential for children's learning, development and wellbeing.
- Research, inquiry and practice-based evidence inform quality education and care.

Code of Ethics for the Heritage Management Committee

As a member of the Heritage Committee, in relation to other members of the Heritage community, including educators and families, I will:

- Treat colleagues, parents/guardians, children, suppliers, visitors and other stakeholders respectfully and professionally at all times.
- Deal courteously with those who hold differing opinions and follow the principles of natural justice when managing internal disputes.
- Respect cultural differences and diversity within the service, and make every effort to encourage and include all children and families in the community.
- Have an open and transparent relationship with The Australian National University.
- Operate with honesty and integrity in all work.
- Be open and transparent in making decisions and undertaking activities, and if that is not possible, explain why.
- Work to the standards set under the National Quality Framework and all applicable legislation as a minimum, and strive to continually improve the quality of the services delivered to the community.

- Disclose conflicts of interest as soon as they arise and effectively managing them.
- Recognise the support and operational contributions of others in an appropriate manner.
- Assess and minimise the adverse impacts of decisions and activities on the natural environment.

Code of Ethics for Heritage Educators

On joining the Heritage community, the Director and educators agree to act according to the Heritage Code of Ethics set out below:

In relation to children, I will:

- Act in the best interests of all children
- Create and maintain safe, healthy, inclusive environments that support children's agency and enhance their learning.
- Provide a meaningful curriculum to enrich children's learning, balancing child and educator-initiated experiences.
- Understand and be able to explain to others how play and leisure enhance children's learning, development and wellbeing.
- Ensure childhood is a time for being in the here and now and not solely about preparation for the future.
- Collaborate with children as global citizens in learning about our shared responsibilities to the environment and humanity.
- Value the relationship between children and their families and enhance these relationships through my practice.
- Ensure that children are not discriminated against on the basis of gender, sexuality, age, ability, economic status, family structure, lifestyle, ethnicity, religion, language, culture, or national origin.
- Negotiate children's participation in research, by taking into account their safety, privacy, levels of fatigue and interest.
- Respect children as capable learners by including their perspectives in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Safeguard the security of information and documentation about children, particularly when shared on digital platforms.

In relation to families, I will:

- Support families as children's first and most important teacher and respect their right to make decisions about their children.
- Listen to and learn with families and engage in shared decision making, planning and assessment practices in relation to children's learning, development and wellbeing.
- Develop respectful relationships based on open communication with the aim of encouraging families' engagement and to build a strong sense of belonging.
- Learn about, respect and respond to the uniqueness of each family, their circumstances, culture, family structure, customs, language, beliefs and kinship systems.
- Respect families' right to privacy and maintain confidentiality.

In relation to colleagues, I will:

- Encourage others to adopt and act in accordance with this Code and take action in the presence of unethical behaviours.
- Build a spirit of collegiality and professionalism through collaborative relationships based on trust, respect and honesty.
- Acknowledge and support the diverse strengths and experiences of colleagues in order to build shared professional knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Use constructive processes to address differences of opinion in order to negotiate shared perspectives and actions.
- Participate in a 'lively culture of professional inquiry' to support continuous improvement.
- Implement strategies that support and mentor colleagues to make positive contributions to the profession.
- Maintain ethical relationships in my online interactions.

In relation to communities, community and society I will:

- Learn about local community contexts and aspirations in order to create responsive programs to enhance children's learning, development and wellbeing.
- Collaborate with people, services and agencies to develop shared understandings and actions that support children and families.
- Use research and practice-based evidence to advocate for a society where all children have access to quality education and care.
- Promote the value of children's contribution as citizens to the development of strong communities.
- Work to promote increased appreciation of the importance of childhood including how children learn and develop, in order to inform programs and systems of assessment that benefit children.
- Advocate for the development and implementation of laws and policies that promote the rights and best interests of children and families.

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 professional.
- Mentor new graduates by supporting their induction into the profession.
- Advocate for my profession and the provision of quality education and care.

Code of Ethics for Heritage Families

As a parent/guardian, in relation to other members of the Heritage community, including educators and other families, I will:

- Be polite and respectful in all interactions and conversations with members of the Heritage community.
- Be mindful and respectful of the diversity in the Heritage community in relation to family circumstances, cultural and religious backgrounds and levels of ability. **Refer to:** Creating Inclusion and Equity Policy.
- Read and comply with all Heritage policies and procedures. **Refer to:** Non-Compliance Policy. Policy Handbook on website.
- Be responsible for my child's health and wellbeing as well as protecting the health of others in the Heritage community by keeping my child at home when they are unwell, and their illness has an exclusion period, or they are not well enough to join in activities. **Refer to:** Illness and Infectious Diseases Policy.
- Ensure that I am on time to pick up my child/ren so that educators can attend to their own families. **Refer to:** Late and Non-Collection of Children Policy.
- Refrain from discussing any grievance issues with educators or other families and follow the Complaints and Grievance Management Policy and Procedures (non-Staff).
- Not take or post photographs of Heritage children other my own on social media without permission from the child's parent/guardian. **Refer to:** Social Media Policy.
- Refrain from using abusive or foul language.

References

Early Childhood Australia (2016). *Code of Ethics 2016.*

<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/eca-code-ethics/>

Legislative References

Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs. (2011). *The Education and Care Services National Regulations, 2011.*

<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653>

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2017). *National Quality Framework Resource Kit.*

<http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework-resource-kit>

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2017). *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.* <http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/NQF-Resource-02-Guide-to-ECS-Law-Regs.pdf>

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2017). *Guide to the National Quality Standard.* <http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/NQF-Resource-03-Guide-to-NQS.pdf>

Related Policies and Material

Name	Location
Committee Handbook	
Communication and Family Involvement Policy	Policy Handbook,
Complaints and Grievance Management Policy (non-Staff)	Heritage Handbook,
Curriculum and Program Planning Policy	Committee Handbook and
Creating Inclusion and Equity Policy	Heritage Constitution on
Employment & Recruitment Policy	Heritage website (Members
Heritage Philosophy Statement	Section).
Heritage Constitution	Policy and Procedures
Meeting Children's Individual and Additional Needs Policy	Manuals in Main Office,
Non-Compliance Policy	Staff Programming
Participation of Students and Volunteers Policy	Room/Library and Main
Staff Complaints and Grievance Management Policy	Entrance
Staff Underperformance and Misconduct Policy	Educator/Relief Educator
	Handbooks.

Version Control

Version Number	Approval Date	Approved by	Author and Amendments
1	April 2009	Management Committee	
2	April 2013	Management Committee	Minor changes to Introduction; added References, Related Material & Version Control sections.
3	8 August 2017	Management Committee	Author: Julia Charters. Updated to reflect the latest Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics, published in 2016. The new Code reflects the

			National Quality Framework and the National Quality Standard, promoting inclusive practice.
4	6 July 2018	Director	Changed name to Code of Conduct (Ethics)

Appendix 1: Related National Regulations and Quality Standards

Regulation 168: Education and care service must have policies and procedures

- (1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that the service has in place policies and procedures in relation to the matters set out in subregulation (2).
- (2) Policies and procedures are required in relation to the following—
- (i) staffing, including -
 - (i) a code of conduct for staff members;

National Regulations 155: Interactions with Children

An approved provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the education and care service provides education and care to children in a way that:

- Encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions;
- Allows the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem;
- Maintains at all times the dignity and rights of the child;
- Gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour;
- Has regard to the family and cultural values, age and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for by the service.

Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice

Standard 1.1: An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development.

- Element 1.1.2: Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
- Element 1.1.5: Every child is supported to participate in the program.
- Element 1.1.6: Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions and influence events and their world.

Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements

Standard 4.2: Educators, coordinators and staff members are respectful and ethical.

- Element 4.2.1; Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.
- Element 4.2.2; Educators, co-ordinators and staff members work collaboratively and affirm, challenge, support and learn from each other to further develop their skills and to improve practice and relationships.
- Element 4.2.3: Interactions convey mutual respect, equity and recognition of each other's strengths and skills.

Quality Area 5: Relationships with children

Standard 5.1: Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child.

- Element 5.1.1: Interactions with each child are warm and responsive and build trusting relationships.
- Element 5.1.2: Every child is able to engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning.
- Element 5.1.3: Each child is supported to feel secure, confident and included.

Standard 5.2: Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults.

- Element 5.2.1: Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities.
- Element 5.2.3: The dignity and rights of every child are maintained at all times.

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

Standard 6.1: Respectful supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained.

Standard 6.2: Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about child rearing are respected.

Standard 6.3: The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children's learning and wellbeing.

- Element 6.3.1: Links with relevant community support agencies are established and maintained.
- Element 6.3.4: The service builds relationships and engages with their local community.