Welcome to Focus on Ethics, a new regular column in Young Children that will deal with using the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct in everyday early childhood education practice. It will help readers build their knowledge of the Code and their skill applying it to their work.

Focus on Ethics will feature two kinds of articles. In the May and November issues, the column will present dilemmas early childhood educators face in their work with young children and their families. The columns in September and March will provide an analysis of the issues involved in the previous column’s scenario.

There are three ways to be involved.

1. **Share an ethical issue.** If you have encountered an ethical dilemma in your workplace that you would like to present in this column, send the coeditors a short (400–500 word) description of the situation.

2. **Respond to the scenarios presented in the column.** Think about the situation described and discuss it with a friend or colleague, in a class, or in a staff meeting, then decide what the “good early childhood educator” should do in this situation. Submit your analysis to the coeditors along with a recommended resolution supported by the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. Readers’ responses will be the basis for the published analysis of each case.

3. **Serve as a guest editor.** Apply to participate as a guest editor for the column if you have a serious interest in, and substantial experience working with, professional ethics. Guest editors will review submitted responses and take the lead in the development of the analysis published in the journal. To apply to serve as a guest editor, e-mail the coeditors a paragraph describing your involvement to date in professional ethics, a dilemma you have encountered in your work, and an analysis and proposed resolution of that situation. The coeditors will contact you if they are able to invite you to serve as a guest editor for an upcoming column.

The coeditors hope that this feature will involve early childhood educators in thinking about and discussing real-life ethical situations encountered in their work. Most important, they want to provide a guide for generating and analyzing ethical resolutions.

To read the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, go to [www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/ethical_conduct](http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/ethical_conduct).

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The coeditors of this column, Stephanie Feeney and Nancy Freeman, have been involved with NAEYC and professional ethics for many years. They have participated in writing and updating the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and its Supplements; coauthored NAEYC’s books on professional ethics (Ethics and the Early Childhood Educator: Using the NAEYC Code of Ethics and Teaching the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct: Activity Sourcebook, with Eva Moravcik); written articles; and led countless conference sessions on the Code and its application. Stephanie and Nancy are excited about this opportunity to lead regular conversations about professional ethics in early childhood education.

An archive of the Focus on Ethics columns will be available at [www.naeyc.org/yc/columns/focusonethics](http://www.naeyc.org/yc/columns/focusonethics).

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Misleading the State Inspector

Consider this scenario submitted by a reader who responded to the Focus on Ethics announcement in the January 2011 issue of Young Children. You may have encountered a similar dilemma in your work.

Shana is a teacher in a child development center. The center has some great qualities but is out of compliance with numerous state licensing regulations. Shana is aware that the director sometimes gives incomplete or misleading information about these things to state licensing inspectors. She is struggling to know what to do: is she obligated to report the infractions to an inspector or to the licensing agency?

Violations include playground equipment that needs to be repaired, infrequent fire drills, rooms filled beyond their licensed capacity, and failure to maintain required adult:child ratios. Shana knows it isn’t right to mislead the state inspectors but is afraid to do anything that would jeopardize her employment; she is a single mother who supports her children on her salary.

What do you think a good early childhood educator should do in this situation? How can Shana use the NAEYC Code to guide her thinking and decision making?

The following process will help you think through this situation. To get your discussion started, we have provided guidance in addressing steps 2 and 3.

1. Identify the problem and discuss why it involves ethics.
2. Identify which, if any, of the Code’s Core Values apply to this situation.
   In this case none of the Code’s Core Values guides our thinking, but we will find guidance as we look at the Ideals and Principles in other sections of the Code.
3. Identify the stakeholders affected by the situation.
   Shana has conflicting responsibilities. What does she owe to each of the stakeholders?

4. Look for guidance in the NAEYC Code. Carefully review the Ideals and Principles in all sections of the Code (including responsibilities to children, families, colleagues, and community and society). List the relevant items in the Code and indicate how you prioritized their applicability to the situation.

5. Describe what you think is the most ethically defensible course of action, based on your review of the Code and your best professional judgment. Even if the resolution seems obvious at first, it is important not to jump to a hasty conclusion. To develop your skill in ethical analysis, you need to consider how all of the applicable items in the Code can help you reach a defensible resolution. It is helpful to discuss the implications of several possible courses of action as you decide what you believe is the best one.

The dilemma

When you have completed your analysis and come up with a proposed course of action for Shana, write an e-mail to the coeditors that includes your recommendation and a brief description of how you used the Code and your judgment to reach this resolution.

In the September 2011 issue of Young Children, the coeditors will present one or more justifiable resolutions based on reader responses and their analysis of the situation. In addition, they will discuss some of the issues raised by the case. When appropriate, they will consult with ethics specialists and others who can provide more insight about a situation.

Respond to this dilemma

E-mail your proposed recommendations to the coeditors, Stephanie Feeney and Nancy Freeman: feeney@hawaii.edu and nfreeman@sc.edu. Be sure to use the subject line “NAEYC ethics.” Responses should be no more than 500 words and must be received by June 20, 2011.