

Showing Our Work: Educator Engagement in the Code of Ethics Revision Process

October 2025

In November 2022, the NAEYC Governing Board approved a formal plan to revise the 2011 Code of Ethical Conduct. [In keeping with NAEYC's consensus-building approach to the development of position statements](#), this action initiated an inclusive, multi-phase, collaborative process ultimately intended to update the Code to reflect current challenges, knowledge, and perspectives in the early childhood education (ECE) field. The process also aimed to enhance the clarity, inclusivity, and usefulness of the Code for educators working with children from birth through age 8 and connect it more clearly with NAEYC's other four foundational position statements.

This document provides an overview of the process by which the Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators was revised, highlighting the various ways in which the wide diversity of early childhood educators' expertise was sought out, integrated, and elevated throughout the revision process and final product. For more information on the key themes that emerged throughout the revision process and the changes that resulted from this engagement, please see the additional resources on NAEYC's website.

Educator Engagement and Expertise: Workgroup and Senior Advisors (2023-2025)

In keeping with organizational practice relating to the development of position statements, NAEYC established a workgroup made up of 23 individuals that included practicing early childhood educators working in homes, centers, and schools, program administrators, faculty members, Interest Forum leaders, partner organization leaders, and NAEYC Governing Board members who brought diverse perspectives and experiences. In addition, five Senior Advisors, including those who wrote original versions of the Code, provided expert guidance throughout the revision process. Between April 2023 and August 2025, the Workgroup met formally 13 times,

and the Senior Advisors convened formally 3 times, with additional emails, document reviews, and ongoing engagement. Key aspects of their collective work included:

- *Knowledge Gathering:* Workgroup members studied other codes of ethics, including from other professions and countries, and participated in subgroups exploring current ethical challenges facing early childhood educators; the philosophical underpinnings of the Code; and the structure and content of specific principles.
- *Reviewing and Editing:* Workgroup members and Senior Advisors extensively reviewed the 2011 version of the Code, including supplements, and engaged in deep reviews and line-by-line editing of draft revisions.
- *Representing Colleagues and Constituents:* Workgroup members regularly connected with their colleagues and constituents, bringing discussions and drafts to their communities, and representing their various viewpoints in meetings.
- *Decision Making:* Workgroup members were responsible for decision-making, discussing and voting on recommendations related to structure and language.

Educator Engagement and Expertise: Fall 2023 Survey

In September 2023, NAEYC and the workgroup designed and distributed a survey to gather broad input on the use and relevance of the current Code. The survey drew 2,862 responses from across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. It provided valuable insights into how the Code was being applied in daily practice and where changes might be needed, including improving readability and increasing alignment.

Educator Engagement and Expertise: Fall 2024 Public Comment Period

In September 2024, NAEYC and the workgroup launched a public comment period to provide the ECE field with opportunities to respond to the first draft of the revision. To support the outreach effort, the draft and related surveys were translated into Spanish, Traditional and Simplified Chinese. A webinar on September 19 provided an overview of

the changes and encouraged engagement from the field. Presentation kits and feedback forms were distributed to affiliates, Interest Forums, and other partners. Comments were accepted via survey, email, and other written and mailed responses. The comment period remained open until December 15, 2024.

In total, inclusive of survey respondents and comments received in the form of letters and memos, more than 500 individuals and organizations, representing a broad cross-section of the early childhood field, participated in the public comment period.

All feedback was compiled and systematically coded to identify recurring themes and patterns and incorporated into the final revision.

- Survey respondents (n=441) were evenly distributed across rural, suburban, and urban communities and demonstrated a relatively balanced age profile (28% under 30, 36% ages 31–49, and 36% age 50+). Nearly half (46%) reported being NAEYC members, while 54% were non-members. Respondents were overwhelmingly female (93%). In terms of where they worked, 39% reported working in child care centers, 10% in family child care homes, 19% in school-based settings, 19% in colleges or universities, 14% in Head Start programs, 4% in faith-based settings, and 4% in multi-site organizations. The most frequently reported role (35%) was that of Early Childhood Educator, spanning all types of settings and age groups, while 16% identified as administrators or program owners; 17% as current early childhood education students; and 17% as faculty / professional development. While reporting on race / ethnicity was not required, of those who answered the question, 67% percent reported their race to be Caucasian/White, 20% indicated African American, 3% Asian, 4% American Indian/Native American/Native Alaskan, and 16% reported being of Hispanic/Latino/a origin.
- Commenters who sent letters, emails, and memos included individual educators, state affiliates, and national organizations such as the NEA, HBCU Teaching in an Inequitable Society Fellowship, an initiative of the NAEYC Black Caucus and the Tougaloo College Research Center for Parity, Justice, and Equity, and the Council for Professional Recognition.

All feedback was compiled and systematically coded to identify recurring themes and patterns and incorporated into the final revision.

Educator Engagement and Expertise: 2023 – 2024 Conference Sessions

Conference sessions led by NAEYC staff and workgroup members offered additional in-person and virtual opportunities for educators and others to engage in the revision process, including:

- A session at the June 2023 NAEYC Professional Learning Institute (PLI), where attendees surfaced ethical concerns and informed the development of the Fall 2023 field survey.
- A session at the November 2023 NAEYC Annual Conference, where attendees provided direct feedback to inform the development of the first draft of the revision.
- A session at the June 2024 NAEYC PLI and the NAECTE Virtual Conference, where attendees provided feedback on the key changes and themes prior to the public comment period.
- A session at the November 2024 NAEYC Annual Conference, where attendees engaged in public discussion and provided feedback during the open public comment period.

Educator Engagement and Expertise: Ongoing

NAEYC's Governing Board approved the revised Code of Ethics in July 2025. While the revised Code of Ethics and related materials include updated resources for educators, program administrators, and adult educators, additional resources and professional learning opportunities will be developed and made available on an ongoing basis to support the adoption and implementation of the revised Code.

These resources will be informed by the ongoing engagement of educators, adult educators, program administrators and others who use and teach the Code of Ethics.

They will be responsive to their needs and strengths and will be designed in part to help early childhood educators navigate complex ethical situations, especially when values come into conflict and the right course of action is unclear.

Thank you to the thousands of early childhood educators and experts who contributed their time, expertise, and insight to the collective effort of revising the Code of Ethics. We hope it serves as a clear, inclusive, and empowering resource for educators and advocates working on behalf of young children and their families.

To share your thoughts or request additional resources that would help you in your role and your work of strengthening the ethical foundation of the early childhood education profession, please email positionstatements@naeyc.org