



# National AfterSchool Association Code of Ethics

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When developing this Code of Ethics, both the Ohio and national teams reviewed several Codes of Ethics from child-serving organizations as well as national membership organizations. A special thanks goes to Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Staff Development Counsel and the National Recreation and Parks Association for their progressive work that served as a reference and inspiration.

NAA has taken reasonable measures to develop the Code in a fair, open, unbiased and objective manner, based on currently available data. However, further research or developments may change the current state of knowledge. Neither NAA nor its officers, directors, members, employees nor agents will be liable for any loss, damage or claim with respect to any liabilities, including direct, special, indirect or consequential damages incurred in connection with the Code or reliance on the information presented.

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## INTRODUCTION

The National Afterschool Association (NAA) has provided leadership in fostering the expansion and inclusion of quality afterschool programming across the nation. NAA has stressed the value of afterschool programming for the individual positive growth and development of children ages 5-18. Its members are dedicated to the common cause of assuring that all children and youth ages 5-18, regardless of abilities, have the opportunity to find accessible, quality afterschool programming that meets the positive growth and development needs of the individual child and the family. Members of NAA are encouraged to support the efforts of the Association and profession by supporting state affiliate and national activities and participating in continuing education opportunities, certification and accreditation.

The Association has consistently affirmed the importance of well-informed and professionally trained personnel to continually improve the implementation of afterschool programs.

This document outlines personal and professional excellence, and encourages the professional development of those working in the afterschool field. The highest standards of professional competence, fairness, impartiality, efficiency, effectiveness and fiscal responsibility are integrated within the sections while avoiding any activity that is in conflict with the performance of job responsibilities.

The NAA Code of Ethics sets standards of conduct for the afterschool professional. It was designed as a resource to assist the afterschool professional in understanding the ethical responsibilities inherent in providing afterschool programs for children ages 5-18. The following document has two sections that can be used separately or together. The first document, Statements of Ethical Conduct for Afterschool Professionals, is a brief overview expressed in broad statements to guide sound, ethical decision-making. These statements provided a framework for the creation of the second document, the NAA Code of Ethics. The NAA Code of Ethics is divided into four sections that outline the ethical responsibilities the afterschool professional has towards children, families, colleagues and the community. The NAA Code of Ethics is intended to define the principles and practices that guide ethical decision-making strategies of afterschool professionals to ensure safe, nurturing environments and positive relationships for children and youth.

*The purpose of the NAA Code of Ethics is to raise awareness of our personal commitment to ethical conduct as we carry out our professional responsibilities, conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct. Our Code of Ethics adheres to the highest standards of integrity and honesty in all public and personal activities to inspire public confidence and trust in the afterschool profession.*

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## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Afterschool Code of Ethics sets forth a set of professional responsibilities that focus on four sections: (1) Children, (2) Families, (3) Colleagues and (4) Community and Society. Each section outlines the responsibilities the afterschool professional strives for in building the relationships mentioned above. The set of principles outlined in this document are meant to establish a framework that outlines the conduct of the afterschool professional while the set of practices is meant to provide guidance when ethical dilemmas occur. Although this document provides a framework and guidance for addressing ethical dilemmas, it is understood that the afterschool professional at all times needs to combine the material in this document with sound professional judgment. Similarly, the Code of Ethics is not meant to substitute for or replace any established organizational policies and procedures.

Each section outlines the core responsibilities of the afterschool professional and practices for a given relationship. This approach is meant to strengthen and affirm our commitment to the core values of the field of Afterschool. Afterschool professionals who face ethical dilemmas are encouraged to use this Code of Ethics as a guide to resolve conflicts with the best interest of the child in mind while maintaining the core values outlined in this document.

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## BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

**Assumption I** – Ethical dilemmas *will occur*.

**Assumption II** - The manner in which ethical situations are handled has a direct impact on the individuals involved.

**Assumption III** – Real life ethical dilemmas are rarely easy. Often the best ethical course of action to take is not obvious. One important value may contradict another. It is our professional responsibility to work with those involved to find the most ethical action to take.

Above all we will bring **NO harm** to any child. We **will** participate in practices that respect and **do not** discriminate against any child by denying benefits, giving special advantages or excluding from program activities on the basis of his or her race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, language, ability or their status, behavior or family beliefs.

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## KEY DEFINITIONS

**Afterschool** is defined as before school, after school, school vacations/holidays and summer.

**Afterschool Programming** is defined as any organized program provided for children and youth ages 5-18 during a time when they are not in school.

**Afterschool Professionals** are those individuals who work in any organized program for children and youth ages 5-18 during a time when they are not in school.

**Core values** are ethical behaviors that are rooted in the history of our field and grounded in research and best practices in afterschool programming.

**Ethics** is defined as the responsibility to intentionally choose what is right, moral and just in practice and in principle.

**Family** includes all persons whom are responsible for and involved with the child/youth and who the child/youth identifies as having significant impact in their lives.

**Principles** are fundamental codes of conduct.

**Practice** is systematically putting the principles into *action* in afterschool programming by the afterschool professional.

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## STATEMENT OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR AFTERSCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

### The Afterschool Professional shall:

- Demonstrate the highest standard of individual conduct, personal accountability, trustworthiness, integrity, fairness, consideration of the rights of others and the highest principles of good business practices and relationships.
- Understand that every individual is a unique and valuable asset to the afterschool community.
- Design environments and activities based on the knowledge of how children grow and learn.
- Develop programs that strive to build a strong community among children where play is maximized, children and youth are empowered, self-esteem and maturity is guided, and self-discipline is taught and encouraged.
- Provide opportunities that enhance individual uniqueness, positive choice, critical thinking, creativity, curiosity and a love of learning.
- Appreciate, support, encourage and respect close ties between the child and family.
- Recognize that understanding that children achieved their full potential when supported in the context of family, culture, community and society.
- Base all relationships with children and families on trust, respect and acceptance.
- Communicate openly and clearly with the afterschool community, staff, children and youth, families, hosts, employees and other professionals.
- Uphold basic principles of trust, honesty, integrity and respect in all professional and business practices.
- Serve as an advocate for children, their families and their teachers in the local community and society.
- Recognize how personal values, opinions and biases can affect professional judgment.
- Be committed to their own learning and professional development.
- Respect colleagues in afterschool programming and support them in maintaining the NAA Code of Ethics.
- Respect and protect the confidentiality of the child, families, colleagues, program and partner organizations and agencies.
- Honor the ideals and principles of the NAA Code of Ethics.

*Afterschool professionals provide programming in a variety of settings that offer a wide range of activities and programming for children ages 5- 18. Those who provide services to the afterschool child and youth operate on a central core of beliefs that each child needs to be treated as an individual and deserves caring professionals who provide a safe, nurturing environment. These environments are planned with the child in mind and encourage independence, exploration, a feeling of self-worth and provide activities and events that create opportunities for social-emotional growth, recreational and educational learning. The afterschool professional needs to work in the best interest of the child.*

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## SECTION I: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The school age years are a period of rapid growth and exploration for all children. Each child grows and develops at his or her own unique, individualized pace. It is the responsibility of afterschool programs to provide a safe, nurturing and enriching environment where all children can develop their cognitive, physical, emotional and social competencies to the fullest extent possible.

### **We dedicate ourselves to these principles:**

- P-1.1** Expand our understanding of children and youth ages 5-18 by staying current with the knowledge related to afterschool programming and demonstrate this knowledge within the afterschool program.
- P-1.2** Allow children and youth to participate in planning the environment and activities that assist in individual growth in social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.
- P-1.3** Appreciate and honor the uniqueness and potential of each child or youth.
- P-1.4** Support and respect the child's and their family's race, ethnicity, gender, ability, religion and socioeconomic status.
- P-1.5** Ensure that each child has opportunities to build positive relationships based on trust, honesty and respect.
- P-1.6** Ensure that each child will have access to the most appropriate programs and resources in the most inclusive environment possible.
- P-1.7** Protect the safety, health, and nutrition of each child within the program.
- P-1.8** Ensure that confidentiality is maintained unless the well being of a child is in question.
- P-1.9** Work as a team with families, staff and schools to set goals for each child, working with outside specialists when necessary.

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## SECTION I: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### As Afterschool Professionals, we:

- Plan environments that foster the social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of all children and youth while allowing for independence and creativity by creating a playful, friendly, empowering program space that celebrates the gifts and talents of the children and youth.
- Provide a wide variety of age and developmentally appropriate activities and interactions to encourage a love of learning through curiosity.
- Provide a structure using guidelines and procedures that clearly communicate boundaries and expectations through the use of positive guidance methods, encouraging and supporting cooperative solutions.
- Create a balance within the daily activities that is responsive to the children's abilities, interest, talents, cultures, feelings and temperament.
- Maintain confidentiality of information related to the child unless the child's welfare is at risk. However, when there is reason to believe that a child's welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies and individuals who may be able to intervene in the child's interest.
- Report all instances of any form of suspected child abuse and/or neglect as outlined by the laws of the individual state/municipality.
- Advocate for policies, procedures and laws that promote quality afterschool programming.
- Establish child-centered practices that will support the development of skills of self-discipline and self-control.
- Ensure that the children's ideas, interests and needs guide the curriculum.
- Provide appropriate curriculum and qualified staff to support the changing needs of children and youth as they grow and mature.
- Provide opportunities for children to become socially and emotionally competent.
- Respect and protect the confidentiality of the children, families, colleagues and the organization.
- Involve all those with relevant knowledge of the child (families, staff, school and specialist) to create an appropriate environment for children and youth.

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## SECTION II: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO FAMILIES

Families are the primary influence in the lives of children. As afterschool professionals we have a responsibility to work in partnership with family members. Building relationships through these partnerships will support the growth and development of each child or youth. Recognizing that all children grow and develop within the context of their family, the community and their culture will allow opportunities for success for each child by enhancing his or her development.

### **We dedicate ourselves to these principles:**

- P-2.1** Develop positive relationships with the families served that are based on mutual trust.
- P-2.2** Appreciate, accept and respect each family's uniqueness of culture, language, customs, beliefs and ethnicity.
- P-2.3** Recognize the parents' right to make decisions for their children and respect different childrearing value systems.
- P-2.4** Report all instances of all forms of suspected child abuse and/or neglect as outlined by the laws of the individual state/municipality.
- P-2.5** Share information with families that help them to understand the child's growth and the value of developmentally appropriate afterschool programming.
- P-2.6** Provide opportunities for parents to interact with program staff and other families, and provide information about community resources and professional services to improve their understanding of their children and improve their skills as parents.
- P-2.7** Ensure that confidentiality is maintained unless the well-being of a family is in question.
- P-2.8** Protect the safety and health of each child within the program.

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## SECTION II: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO FAMILIES

### As Afterschool Professionals, we:

- Welcome all families into our afterschool programming.
- Communicate to families the program philosophy, policies, procedures and personnel qualifications.
- Focus on the strengths and assets of each family unit by encouraging family involvement in our programs.
- Involve families in significant decisions affecting their child(ren).
- Provide community resources to benefit families.
- Communicate with families in a timely manner about incidents involving their child(ren), risks such as exposures to contagious diseases that may result in infection and occurrences that might result in emotional stress.
- Communicate with integrity, honesty and respect to build a trusting, positive relationship with families.
- Develop written policies for the protection of confidentiality and the disclosure of children's records.
- Maintain confidentiality of information related to the child unless the family's welfare is at risk. However, when there is reason to believe that a family's welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies and individuals who may be able to intervene in the child's interest.
- Help family members in conflict by working openly, sharing our observations of the child and helping all parties involved make informed decisions. Refrain from becoming an advocate for one party while working within any existing legal order.
- Report all instances of any form of suspected child abuse and/or neglect as outlined by the laws of the individual state/municipality.

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## SECTION III: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES

Based on our core values of honesty, integrity, trust and respect, our primary responsibility is to create a caring and cooperative workplace. Within this environment professional satisfaction is valued, human diversity is respected and positive relationships are modeled. The same attitudes and behaviors that support a child's growth and development are equally important with co-workers, employers and employees. Although it is understood that throughout a career in the afterschool field professionals may have different roles and responsibilities, the commitment to ethical conduct remains constant. This code is designed to outline the responsibilities of afterschool professionals to their Co-worker, Employee and Employer.

### **We dedicate ourselves to these principles:**

- P-3.1** Establish and maintain relationships with other afterschool professionals based on honesty, respect, integrity, trust and cooperation.
- P-3.2** Implement high quality services that align the mission of the program and the needs of the children.
- P-3.3** Provide ongoing program evaluation, information sharing and identify program improvement.
- P-3.4** Support success of all employees through evaluation, mentoring and enhance knowledge and skills through professional growth opportunities.
- P-3.5** Promote and support professional growth opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills.
- P-3.6** Resolve issues of disagreement in a professional manner and according to the policies and procedures of the agency/organization.
- P3.7** Maintain a stable workforce for those who work on behalf of children and youth, through mutual support, teamwork and equitable compensation (salary, benefits, working conditions and schedules).
- P-3.8** Work collaboratively and cooperatively with co-workers.
- P-3.9** Support and encourage co-workers and colleagues in meeting individual needs for professional growth and development.
- P-3.10** Promote policies, procedures and working conditions that encourage mutual respect, competence, well-being and positive relationships among staff members.
- P-3.11** Recognize the importance of professionalism in the workplace at all times.
- P-3.12** Ensure that confidentiality is maintained unless the well-being of a child or staff member is in question.

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## SECTION III: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES

### We will support these principles by implementing these practices:

- Provide, support for and participate in professional growth opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills.
- Establish a fair, respectful and non-threatening evaluation process that is based on relevant employee performance as it relates to the work responsibilities for children and youth as well as program.
- Develop and maintain comprehensive written personnel policies and procedures. These policies shall be reviewed by and made available to all staff members.
- Provide a workplace that is safe, nurturing and emotionally supportive.
- Address the need for programmatic or policy changes through appropriate and established procedures.
- Speak and act on behalf of the organization only when authorized.
- Take appropriate action in the event of the violation of the operating laws or regulations designed to protect children and youth in the event that a colleague's behavior is harmful to the program's emotional climate.
- Base hiring and promotions decisions solely on a person's record of accomplishment and ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position. Participation in discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, national origin, culture, disability or sexual preference is strictly forbidden.
- Address issues of concern or disagreement with co-workers in a dignified, honest and respectful manner according to the policies and procedures of the agency/organization.
- Share information and resources with appropriate parties to support quality afterschool programming.
- Maintain confidentiality of information related to staff members unless the staff's welfare is at risk. However, when there is reason to believe that the staff's welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies and individuals who may be able to intervene in the staff's interest.
- Engage in collaborative and thoughtful planning with colleagues, children and youth to ensure the alignment of the program's mission with the needs of the children, youth and families.

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## SECTION IV: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

Our responsibility to the families, community agencies and organizations concerned with the welfare of children and youth is to provide high quality programming staffed with educated, qualified and responsive individuals who have an understanding of the abilities and developmental needs of children and youth. Our responsibility to society is to encourage and support the socialization of the children and youth by providing opportunities to develop leadership and communication skills that will enable them develop in a socially acceptable way. Our responsibilities include engaging in and facilitating collaborations and cooperative agreements that will enhance programming, educating (and informing) others about the need and benefits of afterschool programming and advocating for the welfare and protection of all children and youth.

### **We dedicate ourselves to these principles:**

- P-4.1** Provide the community with high-quality afterschool programming that meets the needs of the children, youth, their families and the community.
- P-4.2** Provide access to afterschool programming that promotes the well-being of every child and youth by facilitating positive development through age and developmentally appropriate practices.
- P-4.3** Work cooperatively with child-serving agencies and organizations to share the responsibility for the care and education of children and become a collective voice for the rights and welfare of all children and youth.
- P-4.4** Develop positive relationships that work collaboratively to maximize resources and programming available to children and youth.
- P-4.5** Educate and inform others as to the vital role of afterschool programming in the lives of children and the community at large.
- P-4.6** Support the development of policies and laws that promote the well-being of children, youth and families.
- P-4.7** Further the professional development of the field of afterschool programming.
- P-4.8** Promote the afterschool field's commitment to realizing its core values as reflected in this Code.
- P-4.9** Ensure that organizational confidentiality is maintained.
- P-4.10** Work collaboratively with programs, schools and community agencies/organizations to ensure effective transitions for children and youth.

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## SECTION IV: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

### We will support these principles by implementing these practices:

- Provide professional and accessible afterschool programming that will enhance the community's ability to raise and support healthy children.
- Establish and/or participate in community organizations that further the development of afterschool programming and professionals.
- Recommend for employment only those who are competent and qualified.
- Learn how the legislative process works in order to advocate for children, youth and families.
- Create a learning environment that encourages, facilitates and supports ongoing professional development.
- Become familiar with and implement laws and regulations within your state that serve to protect the children and youth in your program.
- Create interpersonal and public opportunities to support programs that are advancing and developing children and the afterschool field and take responsibility for observing, monitoring and evaluating programs that fall short of this mission.
- Work collaboratively with community agencies/organizations to ensure the effective transition of children and youth to the afterschool program.
- Maintain confidentiality of information related to the agency/organization unless the welfare of the children or staff is at risk. However, when there is reason to believe that the children's or staff's welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies and individuals who may be able to intervene in the children's or staff's interest.

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