

Professional Supervision of Children

Practice Notes support Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) in understanding and applying the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* by examining a specific topic and providing practical examples and guidance.

What is Professional Supervision of Children?



The *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* highlights that RECEs are in a position of trust and that the well-being, learning and care of all children under their professional supervision is their foremost responsibility.

Professional supervision requires RECEs to pay close attention to children, their environment and relevant details about children and their families. RECEs use their professional judgement to make numerous practice decisions throughout the day. They consider a number of different factors including, but not limited to, the following:

People and Places

- Relevant medical conditions, medications, disabilities and interventions
- Emergency contact information and adults authorized to pick-up a child
- Knowledge of the dispositions, strengths and interests of the children in their care
- Roles and responsibilities of staff, students and volunteers in the practice setting
- Number and location of all children
- Indoor and outdoor physical environments
- All transition areas
- Any other relevant information about children and families

Policies and Practices

- Legislation related to early learning and child care
- Workplace policies and procedures
- Child development theories and practice
- All daily routines, including transitions
- Strategies for effective communication with children, families and colleagues

Factors Influencing Professional Supervision

Providing safe and appropriate professional supervision of children depends on a number of factors that are often connected and may impact one another. Potential challenges can arise, such as balancing the needs of an individual child with those of the group. It is important for RECEs to understand that *failing to adequately supervise a child who is under the professional supervision of a member of the College* is considered professional misconduct (Professional Misconduct Regulation).

Some of the key factors include:



Communication



Transitions



Physical Environment



Staff



Professional Knowledge



Communication

Clear, collaborative communication is vital to providing appropriate professional supervision of children. Effective communication allows you to obtain complete and current information about children and families. It allows RECEs to anticipate and prevent problems and it supports them to learn from past supervision challenges.

Information and circumstances in relation to children, families, colleagues or the learning environment will change over time, and sometimes throughout the course of the day. RECEs should ask sufficient questions or take the initiative to obtain information when they are uncertain about any situation related to the supervision of children. It is essential to develop responsive relationships with children, families and colleagues and maintain open communication to acquire relevant and evolving information.

RECEs may be required to professionally supervise children in some unfamiliar or high-risk situations, such as emergency evacuations or transitions into unfamiliar settings. When RECEs are well-informed and share information with colleagues, they can collaboratively anticipate and prepare for situations that might require additional attention.

Transitions

RECEs consider how the environments affect children through daily care routines and transitions (Standard III: C.8). Using their professional knowledge, RECEs implement strategies to ensure sufficient time for safe and supportive transitions while maintaining supervision at all times.

Some of these strategies include:

- Knowing all transitions and routines, proposing improvements and clearly communicating any changes.
- Paying particular attention to new or unfamiliar environments and routines.
- Conducting regular environment scans, attendance checks and head counts.
- Inspecting environments for hazards, such as small hideaways, damaged gates or locked and unlocked doors.
- Transitioning in small groups that reflect children's ages and capabilities.
- Confirming attendance before, during and after transitions.
- Increasing the adult-to-child ratio when required.
- Clarifying supervision roles and responsibilities.
- Sharing relevant information received from families.
- Knowing which children are new to the group or need additional support.



RECEs know that planned, organized transitions make it easier to supervise and support children. When there are changes in routines, such as moving rooms to accommodate other programs, RECEs effectively communicate with colleagues, children and families to help ensure that transitions are smooth, new environments are safe and welcoming, and professional supervision is maintained.

RECEs also anticipate, and respond to, challenges when the group is moving to another space. These instances may include times when a child needs to use the toilet, a child falls down and scrapes their knee or an adult arrives to pick-up a child in the middle of a transition.

Physical Environment

RECEs pay close attention to the way the physical environment is arranged and understand the importance of knowing:

- The benefits and limitations of physical environments
- How to provide engaging environments
- How to minimize potential hazards
- Observation, monitoring and documentation techniques
- The number of children in the environment

RECEs ensure that the environment complies with safety, health and accessibility legislation by actively observing and monitoring it. They also avoid exposing children to harmful or unsafe situations (Standard III: C.2). RECEs effectively position themselves where they can scan, see and hear children and the activities they are engaged in. For example, if there are spaces in which children can hide, RECEs need to make sure that they can effectively monitor them. RECEs also ensure that they can communicate effectively with colleagues when needed by using appropriate communication devices such as walkie-talkies.



Play-based learning supports effective professional supervision because it allows RECEs to care for children in environments that stimulate and interest them. When children are engaged in activities, they are less likely to become bored or distracted. The temptation to find things that spark their interest outside of the supervised learning environment is reduced.

Staff

When RECEs have a clear understanding of their employment responsibilities and those of their colleagues, they make well-informed decisions about professional supervision, observation, documentation and reporting. Through professional collaboration, RECEs can share mutual and differing areas of concern.

A staffing change, such as new employees or supply staff, requires clear communication about policies and procedures. All staff must also be aware of supervision requirements and daily routines. Current and relevant information about children's unique dispositions, medical requirements, disabilities and families is necessary to ensure supportive and effective supervision.

New or supply RECEs have an ethical responsibility to seek out information and ask questions if they are unclear about their responsibilities. RECEs with more experience support colleagues who are new to the practice setting by:



- Working closely with them to ensure they are familiar with routines and relevant information about the children and families (i.e. allergies, interests and capabilities).
- Establishing and clearly communicating realistic expectations regarding responsibility.
- Answering questions they have about their role and responsibilities.



Professional Knowledge

RECEs provide appropriate professional supervision of children based on their age, development and environment (Standard III: C.5). Engaging activities that stem from children's interests support professional supervision. When children are involved in flexible and stimulating group experiences, that are appropriate in both length and group size, RECEs can more effectively maintain responsive supervision at all times. RECEs are also expected to know and understand current practices, legislation, workplace policies and procedures that are relevant to professional practice and to the care of children (Standard IV).

For example, RECEs need to know workplace policies related to transitions, evacuation procedures and attendance protocols. They engage in collaborative reflection and ongoing learning to deepen their knowledge about child development, current pedagogical approaches and other relevant information related to professional supervision of children.

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