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Dr. Jean Clinton

Explains the Pivotal Role
of RECEs in Supporting
Children's Mental Health





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About this Publication

The College of Early Childhood Educators regulates the profession of early childhood education in the public interest and works towards its vision of a profession in which all members accept responsibility for practice excellence. Published twice a year in Toronto, ON, *Connexions* provides members and the public with College and sector news along with regular features on the early childhood education profession.

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On the Cover: Dr. Jean Clinton

Elected Council Members

- Lois Mahon RECE, President – District 1
- Eugema Ings RECE – District 1
- Lisa Lamarre RECE – District 2
- Susan Quaiff RECE – District 3
- Stacey Lepine RECE – District 4
- Susan Joy Scoffin RECE – District 4
- Karen Guthrie RECE – District 5
- Nancy Roscoe RECE – District 5
- Richard (Dick) Winters RECE – District 5
- Anna Baas-Anderson RECE – District 6
- Sophia Tate RECE – District 6
- Susan (Darlene) Edgar RECE, Vice-President – District 7
- Barbara Brown RECE – District 8
- Vera Niculena (Nici) Cole RECE – District 8

Publicly Appointed Council Members

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- Madeleine L. Champagne, Ottawa
- Karen Damley CPA, CA, Mississauga
- Rosemary Fontaine, Toronto
- Christine Forsyth, Toronto
- Larry O'Connor, Brock
- Jason Powell RN, Oakville
- Ann Robichaud-Gagné, Ottawa
- Nerene Virgin, Hamilton

College Administration

- Registrar and CEO: Beth Deazeley LL.B
- Director of Registration and Member Services: Cynthia Abel RECE
- Director of Corporate Services: James Cha
- Director of Professional Practice: Melanie Dixon RECE
- Director of Professional Regulation: Marc Spector LL.B



Lois Mahon RECE
President

Since February 2009 I have had the honour of serving as Council president. As I conclude my third and final term on Council this spring, I am full of reflection both about my own professional experience and the changes our profession has undergone since the *Early Childhood Educators Act* was passed almost 10 years ago.

The positive advancements in our profession through the College and its work include the development of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*, with a second edition nearly ready for publication. We have developed and been recognized for exemplary processes for the registration of members, complaints and discipline functions and Council practices in governance. We have over 51,000 current members and have held two symposiums on leadership in early childhood education, conducted two leadership pilot projects and published more than 20 professional resources. This September, we will continue the roll-out of a mandatory Continuous Professional Learning program.

Collectively as a profession we have enhanced interdisciplinary teams. We've been working with other professionals to establish mutually beneficial relationships and interprofessional collaboration with teachers, health care providers and others in children's services. This will help children and families in many ways and enrich our profession as well.

Through the College, RECEs have stepped into the identity of being regulated professionals in Ontario. As we do that together we become more professional, we accept the responsibilities our profession has to families, and we embrace the College's expectations of us in our practice. The more we do this, the more we are being recognized.

We are elevating the profession and we all have a responsibility, individually and collectively, to continue this work. We must also continue to remind those who aren't living up to our profession's standards that they need to do so.

I want to thank the College's staff and Council, our committee members and all of the people who've worked with us. I also want to thank my fellow RECEs across Ontario for the support and feedback they have offered not just to me, but to our College. I am humbled and honoured by the part I have played in establishing our regulatory body.

My journey doesn't end here – I'll continue my professional learning. I truly believe the more we learn the more competent we become. And, the more competent we become the more confident we become. I'll continue to be part of this special movement, where the research on brain development and the elevation of our profession are coming together to demonstrate, without a doubt, that early childhood educators are integral to the lives of children and families in Ontario.

It's time to celebrate who we are, our profession and the knowledge we have to share.

In the words of the great Dr. Seuss, "If things start happening, don't worry, don't stew, just go right along and you'll start happening too."

Cheers,

Lois Mahon RECE



Beth Deazeley
Registrar & CEO

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

One of the great privileges of being Registrar is that I get to work with some truly extraordinary people on Council. Some of the brightest, most committed members of the profession and the public devote their time and energy to serving the public interest and the early childhood education profession as members of the College's Council and committees.

In June, as always, we celebrate transitions on Council. We bid farewell to some long-serving members, including the College's first President. Working with these professionals has been an honour, as well as a wonderful opportunity for growth and learning. The College has accomplished some extraordinary things under their leadership.

We have the benefit of standing upon their shoulders and building upon their work as the College moves forward into our 2017-2018 fiscal year. We are delighted to welcome new members of Council, and a new President and Executive Committee. I am excited to work under their direction, continuing the College's work as we move toward the final year of our three-year strategic plan.

The next few months will mark significant milestones both for the College and the profession. The revised *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*, with its focus on leadership and professional responsibility, will come into effect. The first year of the mandatory Continuous Professional Learning program is well underway, and members will begin declaring their compliance with Year One, and moving into Year Two and the new Portfolio Cycle. We are engaging with stakeholders as we review the requirements for entry to practice.

As an established regulatory body, our focus will be on enhancing and reinforcing awareness among members, employers and stakeholders that RECEs are regulated and what their professional responsibilities and obligations are. We will continue to protect the public interest through rigorous and transparent enforcement. And we are committed to engaging, working with and supporting members in achieving excellence in their practice and in developing leadership capacity in the profession.

I look forward to welcoming our new Council in June and undertaking this important work with them.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Deazeley".

Council Election Results

The College conducted its 2017 election of Council members during the month of April and the final results of the election are now available.

The following five members of the College have been elected to Council:

Electoral District	Elected Council Members
1 - North and North-East Region	Laura Urso RECE Lori Huston RECE
2 - East Region	Julie Cyr RECE
6 - Central West Region	Cynthia Jefferson RECE Kristine Parsons RECE

In June 2017, Council will meet for the first time and elect a new Council President and Executive Committee. Council will also establish its committee structure and appoint non-Council committee members.

The next election will take place in **April 2018 in District 3 - South East Region, District 4 - Central East Region, and District 8 - South West Region.**

Serving on a Committee of the College Council

Members of the College who are not elected members of Council have an opportunity to apply to serve on a committee of the College. These committees include the Complaints, Discipline, Fitness to Practise, Registration, Registration Appeals and Standards of Practice committees.

Most committees usually meet at least four to six times a year, and committee members are paid an honorarium per day. Reasonable travel, accommodation and meal expenses are reimbursed.

At the first regular meeting after the election, scheduled for June 14, 2017, non-Council members will be appointed by Council to serve on committees. Only a small number of non-Council members are appointed each year.

Understanding the Public Register

The College's online public register is the only accurate source of information about an individual's registration status. New online resources are available to support members, employers and the public including:

- A document with descriptions about each of the fields in the public register
- Information about each type of registration status
- A series of FAQs that include questions and information about renewal dates
- A one-minute video on how to use the public register

 Go to college-ece.ca/publicregister to learn more.

Dr. Jean Clinton Explains the Pivotal Role of RECEs in **Supporting Children’s Mental Health**

By Sharon Ho

Registered early childhood educators should aim to have a child’s eyes light up when they come into the room. That was one message from Dr. Jean Clinton’s keynote address at the College of Early Childhood Educators’ Annual Meeting this past January.

The renowned clinical professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University spoke about the importance of a strong relationship between a child and their RECE for the child’s mental health.

“The relationships children have with RECEs is absolutely pivotal if we think of mental health as developing the capacity to build relationships with peers and adults to be able to express, manage and experience emotions,” said Dr. Clinton.

According to Dr. Clinton, the quality of the relationship is what builds the brain connections between multiple areas of the organ. A child can be set up for success well beyond the early years through such connections.

Close, nurturing relationships can also help children identify sources of stress in their lives and help them manage stress. Stress can negatively impact a child’s mental health, well-being and how they approach their daily lives. While stress can be a normal part of life, Dr. Clinton knows that one type, toxic stress, can have a detrimental effect on a child.

“Toxic stress occurs when children are feeling lots and lots of pressure that turns on the alarm system in their body and brain,” said Dr. Clinton. “It becomes a threat when the system is turned on and there isn’t any buffering relationship to help children turn it off or help them learn how to deal with stress. It’s problematic when children experience toxic stress because we know the consequences affect brain and health development along with the immune system.”



Dr. Jean Clinton/Photo Credit: Boys and Girls Club of Kingston and area

Children who tend to be more exposed to toxic stress include those living in poverty without supportive relationships, children who are maltreated or neglected and children with families experiencing high levels of conflict or debilitating parental mental illness.

What does toxic stress look like? It may be a child thinking that someone accidentally toppling over the blocks they are working on was an intentional attack, not an accident.

“They are not able to be soothed by the educator because they haven’t developed the pathways in their brain to know an adult can help,” said Dr. Clinton. “The RECE should not judge or punish them but rather say ‘You’re really upset. I’m here to help you calm down’”.

RECEs can help children deal with toxic stress by building relationships of trust with them. Dr. Clinton encourages RECEs to do the following:

- Become knowledgeable about the child by documenting lots of observations about them.
- Sit down with the child, be present for them and give them space.

Building a relationship of trust can take a long time if a child is experiencing toxic stress and can depend on their natural temperament, according to Dr. Clinton.

How can an RECE tell if they are making progress in building such a relationship?

- When the child smiles more spontaneously at the RECE.
- When the child wants to share their enjoyments.
- When the child points things out to the RECE during their activities together.

“They’ll start to use you as a resource to their learning rather than avoiding you and not being engaged,” said Dr. Clinton.

Visit [youtube.com/collegeofece](https://www.youtube.com/collegeofece) to watch Dr. Clinton’s presentation from the College’s Annual Meeting. Highlights include:

- The important role of RECEs as “neuroplasticians”.
- How a child’s mental health can also be affected by any stress their RECE is experiencing. ■

The College’s new *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*, to be published in June 2017, outlines the importance of relationships between RECEs and children.

Code of Ethics A. Responsibilities to Children states:

- RECEs make the well-being, learning and care of children their foremost responsibility.

Standard I: Caring and Responsive Relationships

B.1. states:

- RECEs are knowledgeable about the research and theories related to the impact of caring and responsive relationships on children’s development, learning, self-regulation, identity and well-being.

Standard I: Caring and Responsive Relationships

B.2. states:

- RECEs are knowledgeable about a range of strategies that support ongoing positive interactions with children and families.

Standard III: Safety, Health and Well-being in the Learning Environment

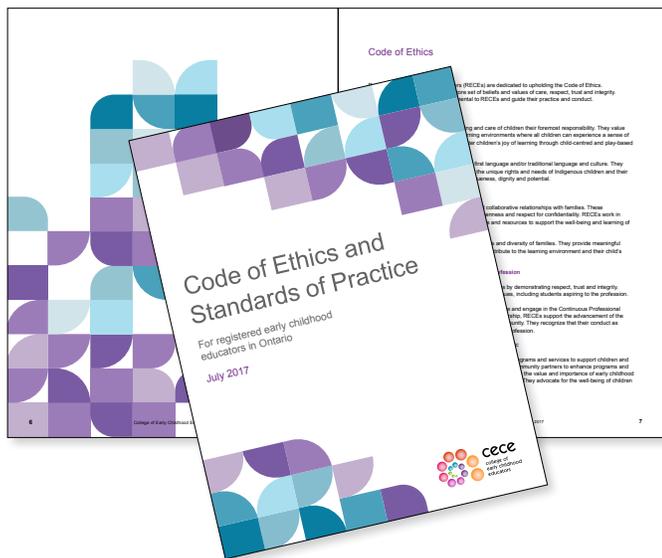
B.7. states:

- RECEs are familiar with a variety of strategies to promote and support children’s well-being and safety in the learning environment including, but not limited to, nutrition and physical, mental and emotional health.

📖 Visit college-ece.ca/resources to read *Practice Guideline: Supporting Positive Interactions with Children* to learn more about how RECEs can support children.

A New Edition of the **Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice** is Coming

In June 2017, all members of the College will be mailed a copy of the new *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*. The 2017 edition will replace the original version, published in 2011.



Importance

Having a code of ethics and standards of practice is one of the hallmarks of what it means to be a professional. The Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice communicate to RECEs and the public the scope and nature of the profession. The Code of Ethics sets out the ethical values that guide the professional practice of RECEs. The Standards of Practice outline the expectations regarding knowledge, skills and practice in six key areas.

Code and Standards Review Process

As part of its strategic priorities, the College undertook a two-year review of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*. The College heard from members and stakeholders through surveys, focus groups and roundtables. It also received feedback from Council and its committees and sought expert advice on:

- inclusion
- issues specific to indigenous and francophone communities
- legislation and policy changes in the sector
- trends in professional regulation; and
- issues emerging through the College's complaints and disciplinary proceedings.

The final *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* was approved by College Council in April 2017 and will be in effect as of July 1, 2017.



Code and Standards

Highlights

The updated document reflects many significant changes the profession has undergone since 2011. The revised *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* acknowledges that all RECEs are in a position of leadership by nature of the profession they practise. The document places greater emphasis on relationships, well-being, learning environments, current pedagogical approaches and the value of communication and collaboration. It also provides more clarity on dual relationships and addresses the use of technology.

The updated *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* is written in clear language as a practical guide to help RECEs understand what they need to know and how they need to practise.

Each of the six standards of practice now has three elements:

Principle – serves as an important summary of each standard and offers key highlights of the knowledge and practice sections from each standard.

Knowledge – identifies the knowledge related to each standard that RECEs must have in order to practise the profession.

Practice – the skills, actions and behaviours related to each standard that RECEs must demonstrate in order to practise the profession.

Accountability

All RECEs are legally required to adhere to the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*, regardless of their role or practice setting.

If there is a conflict between the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* and an RECE's work environment or the policies and procedures of his or her employer, they have an obligation to comply with the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*.

The Code and Standards, along with the Professional Misconduct Regulation, the Continuous Professional Learning Regulation and the *Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007*, serve as the basis upon which RECEs are held accountable for their practice and to the public. They may be used to determine and evaluate issues of professional conduct. Failing to maintain the standards of the profession is a defined act of professional misconduct under the Professional Misconduct Regulation.

More information

Numerous resources from the College illustrate the meaning and purpose of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*. They are also a source for reflection and dialogue about the practice of RECEs.

Resources include professional advisories, practice guidelines, case studies, vignettes, reflection and discussion guides, webinars and video resources. ■

 Go to college-ece.ca/standards for more information.

The CPL Portfolio Cycle is Coming Soon!

The College will introduce Step Two of the mandatory Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) program with the launch of the CPL Portfolio Cycle.

The CPL Portfolio Cycle is a two-year professional learning process that members will repeat throughout their careers.

Who

RECEs who have already started the CPL program by completing Step One: Expectations for Practice Module 2016 will start their first CPL Portfolio Cycle **the next time they renew their membership on or after September 1, 2017**. Find out when you start the CPL Portfolio Cycle by reviewing the CPL Start Date Chart at: college-ece.ca/cpl-start-dates

Why

The purpose of the CPL Portfolio is to ensure RECEs reflect on their practice and plan for, engage in and document professional learning experiences linked to the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*.

All RECEs regardless of employment status or title, must complete the CPL Portfolio components and the required steps throughout their professional careers.

The CPL Portfolio aims to:

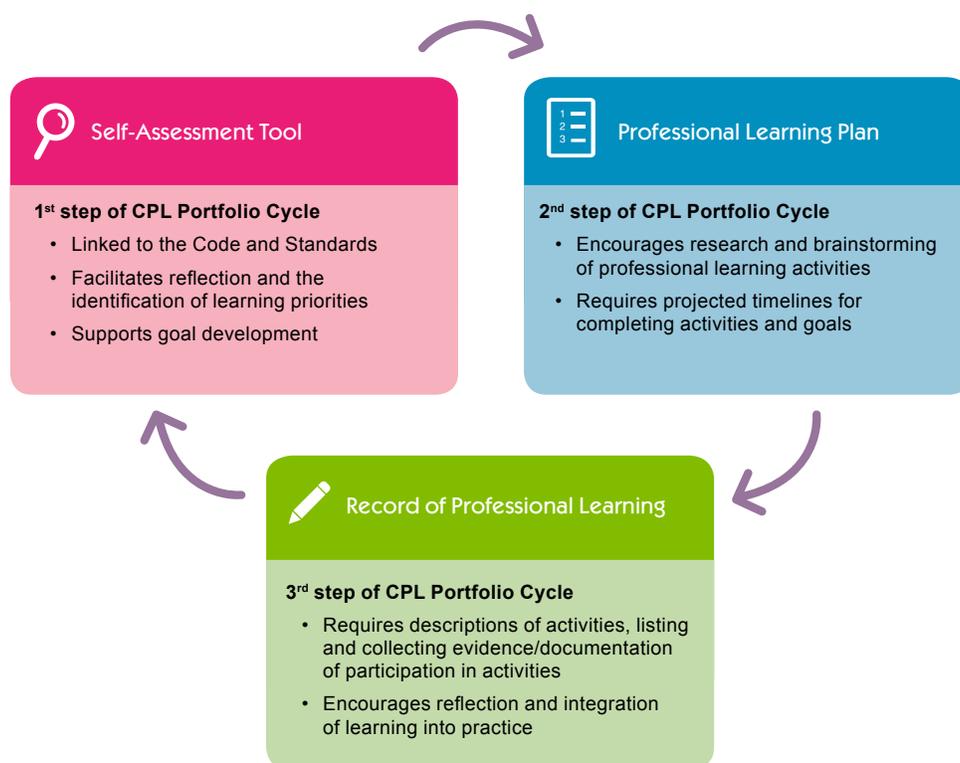
- facilitate self-reflection
- support practical and useful goal development
- promote self-directed learning activities
- support an increased understanding and application of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*
- improve and strengthen the professional practice of RECEs.

How

The CPL program does not require members to complete a specific number of hours, workshops or courses. It is a self-reflective and self-directed ongoing learning framework that supports RECEs to continually grow as professionals. It is up to members to decide their goals and the types of learning activities to engage in and how much time they need in order to achieve their goals. Some learning activities could be integrated into daily professional practice.

What

The three components of the CPL Portfolio are:



Where

The CPL Portfolio Handbook and required components will be available on the College website in July. All members will also receive a paper copy of the handbook and components **after they renew their membership** starting September 1, 2017.

CPL Portfolio Handbook

The CPL Portfolio Handbook is an instructional guidebook developed by the College to support RECEs in completing the required components of the CPL Portfolio. The handbook provides information about what RECEs must do and at what time. It also provides tips and suggestions to support an understanding of how to engage in the portfolio process. The Self-Assessment Tool, Professional Learning Plan and Record of Professional Learning, will be included at the back of the new handbook.

It is highly recommended, but not required, that RECEs refer to the handbook when completing the necessary portfolio components. ■

For more information on the program, go to college-ece.ca/CPL.

Taking a Lead: Creating a Community of Practice

By Sharon Ho



Sue McAllister RECE (left) Tonya Millsap RECE (right)
Photo credit: Kim Stoyanoff

In 2015, Sue McAllister RECE had the unique experience of participating in the College's Leadership Pilot Two (LP2).

The aim of LP2 was to enhance the leadership skills of RECEs who were supervisors in licensed child care. Participants from across the province were invited to:

- connect with networks
- establish communities of practice
- share their learning; and
- encourage broader community participation through reflection and dialogue about the College's ethical and

professional standards as well as engage in professional learning.

As part of her commitment to LP2, McAllister, a supervisor at YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka Child Care Centre learned more about communities of practice (CoPs) by joining the County of Simcoe's Child Care Committee for supervisors.

CoPs are an approach to ongoing professional learning grounded in reflective practice and collaborative inquiry. In their book, *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge*, Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William M. Snyder define CoPs as "a group of people who share a concern or passion for something

they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly over time."

In this CoP McAllister facilitated a series of reflective exercises on *How Does Learning Happen?*. The experience allowed McAllister to engage in continuous professional learning in a collaborative way.

"I feel a need to build close personal relationships through my work," said McAllister. "I think I do that through meaningful discussion. It helps me reflect on what I do in my daily work and how I interact with my colleagues and the children."

Inspired by the Child Care Committee, McAllister decided to create a CoP with her colleagues from the YMCA. McAllister was also encouraged to form a CoP by her mentor, Tonya Millsap RECE, the Program Supervisor, Children and Community Services for the County of Simcoe. Millsap participated in LP2 as the Community Liaison for the county.

According to Millsap, the County of Simcoe believes in supporting CoPs because they provide meaningful learning experiences.

“We believe that RECEs have this amazing depth of knowledge, experience and leadership to share,” said Millsap. “We’re really committed to working in partnership with our system to invest in and create these kinds of shared spaces for exchanging perspectives and for collaborative learning.”

With the support of Millsap, McAllister and her colleagues from the YMCA invited RECEs from the region to a meeting in November 2016 to discuss forming a CoP. They then conducted a survey to find out what other RECEs were interested in learning. They launched their CoP, Early Childhood Professional Learning and Networking Community, in February.

The County of Simcoe has supported McAllister’s CoP through Millsap’s mentorship and by providing funding and logistical support. McAllister has found Millsap’s mentorship invaluable.

“She easily recognized where our team needed help so she was able to nudge us forward,” said McAllister. “Tonya has the skill of asking the challenging, difficult questions that make you think.”

The first meeting of the CoP focused on starting a discussion about a vision statement. This discussion involved answering several questions including “What do we perceive as meaningful learning experiences for children in our care and community?” and “How can we inspire each other as educators and colleagues?”

McAllister and her colleagues will compile the answers to the questions and present them at the next meeting as part of creating a vision statement for the CoP. Subsequent meetings will be held every second month and will focus on one of the topics people are interested in learning as identified in the survey. These topics include:

- *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years*
- Self-regulation and mental health
- Outdoor environments
- Documentation
- Educator self-care and time management ■

Creating or attending a CoP can be part of your continuous professional learning plan and activities.

The new *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*, to be published in June, will highlight the importance of the Continuous Professional Learning program and engagement with your professional community.

Code of Ethics C. Responsibilities to Colleagues and to the Profession states:

- RECEs value lifelong learning and reflective practice and engage in the Continuous Professional Learning program.

Standard IV: Professionalism and Leadership C.7. states:

- RECEs engage with their professional community through activities such as participation in research, associations, committees or professional networks, or by acting as a role model or mentor.

The College wrote about its work to review the requirements for registration in the Spring 2016 issue of *Connexions*. This work was subsequently launched as the “Practice Readiness Initiative” at our Annual Meeting this past January.

A lot has changed and continues to change in the early learning and child care sector since the College was established in 2008. We are considering what these changes might mean for the requirements for registration given the College’s mandate to serve and protect the public interest.

Specifically, we are asking “What does it mean to be ready to practise as an early childhood educator?” The College is exploring this question through three lenses – safety, competence (i.e., knowledge, skills and judgement) and professionalism.

These are big but important questions for any regulator to consider. The answers may mean that the College will need to make changes to the requirements for registration, which would involve seeking amendments to the Registration Regulation.

As this work progresses, members and stakeholders will be consulted as appropriate, and updates will be provided. Stay tuned for more information. ■



Visit [youtube.com/collegeofece](https://www.youtube.com/collegeofece) to watch the presentation from the Annual Meeting “Because it’s 2017: RECEs as Professionals and Leaders” for a more detailed explanation of what practice readiness means.



Kathryn (Kate) Lawrence is an RECE in Sault Ste. Marie, ON. She is the Professional Services Manager for Early Childhood Education at Thrive Child Development Centre, where she has worked for almost 21 years. Lawrence oversees the H.S. McLellan Preschool and the Early Learning Resources program, through which resource consultants (who are also RECEs at Thrive) support children with special needs.

The College of Early Childhood Educators comprises unique members – each with a different background and story to tell. Conversation with an RECE features registered early childhood educators who are passionate about their profession and the people they serve.

Nominate an RECE you'd like us to have a conversation with by sending an e-mail to communications@college-ecce.ca or call 1 888 961-8558 ext. 325.

Q: Can you tell us about your career path and your work at Thrive?

A: My last placement at Sault College involved working with children with special needs. I was terrified to go. I had a fear of how complex it might be to work with children with special needs. After that placement I knew that this was what I wanted to do.

I find my work rewarding because there are specific priorities identified to support the children in their development. I find that families of children with special needs look to us for support and guidance.

Q: Is the programming at Thrive unique?

A: What is unique about us is our inclusive philosophy. This philosophy is woven into everything we do. We start with inclusion when we plan the programming.

The educators are always looking for ways to adapt the curriculum for children with special needs. When they offer the adaptation it's offered to everyone so that no one is singled out for being different. We found through training and professional learning what true inclusion looks like.

Q: Do you and your RECEs see yourselves as leaders in inclusion?

A: Yes we definitely do. We share our knowledge interprofessionally with other programs. We network with other RECEs and have been asked to give presentations. We do what we can to promote inclusion.

Q: Is there any interprofessional collaboration at Thrive?

A: We are fortunate that we can talk to resource consultants, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists. We all participate in planning and setting priorities based on the needs of the children. The therapists always share information

and ideas with the RECEs. The RECEs share their ideas and information with the therapists. The centre wholeheartedly believes in sharing knowledge with everybody.

Q: How does Thrive's inclusive philosophy affect children and families?

A: When families arrive the parents' minds are put at ease because they sense our expertise. All the parents have a chance to get to know and support each other. I hear from parents about how important it is for their children to be invited to birthday parties. Here the children are always invited to birthday parties because everyone is respected and treated equally. ■



Practice Matters features questions regarding the College and the early childhood education profession. The College's Director of Professional Practice, Melanie Dixon RECE, and the Professional Practice team address issues that members face and apply the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* to various situations.

📧 Do you have a Professional Practice question? E-mail practice@college-ece.ca.

Q: At a recent staff meeting we discussed ending the practice of accepting early childhood education students from the nearby community college for their field placements. Do RECEs have an ethical obligation to mentor placement students in their work settings?

Consider the following...

A key component of any early childhood education program is field placements in early years settings. This experience is important to support students to feel prepared to practise the profession. During field placements students have the opportunity to:

- observe children
- plan activities
- document learning
- interact with families
- apply appropriate legislation, regulations and policies; and
- link the theory they are learning in their classes to real-life practice.

Having an RECE as a supervisor and mentor during these placements is critical to the learning experience of students. RECEs can support students to understand their role and responsibilities, provide feedback on their assignments and activities and demonstrate the professional ethics and standards that RECEs follow.

Standard IV. C. 6. in the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (to be published in June 2017) states that RECEs “support and collaborate with colleagues, including early childhood education students and those who are new to the profession”. The Code of Ethics also states that RECEs “support, mentor and collaborate with colleagues, including students aspiring to the profession”.

Supervising and mentoring students is a leadership opportunity for RECEs and benefits early years programs. Mentoring is a learning experience for the mentor and the mentee. RECEs have the opportunity to develop skills in areas such as leadership and interprofessional collaboration. It also helps RECEs to remain current in their practice. All of these benefits are why mentoring is encouraged within the College's Continuous Professional Learning portfolio.

While the benefits of accepting, supporting and mentoring students are numerous, employers are not required to accept students for field placements. An employer may, at times, consider denying a request to accept a student for a variety of reasons.

As regulated professionals, RECEs should discuss with their colleagues and employers their professional values and responsibilities to support students. ■

Put it into Practice: Reflect on your own early childhood education training and the field placements you experienced. What did you learn? What made a difference? How did your RECE mentor support your growth? What kind of mentor do you want to be for others? How does mentoring others benefit you?

The College of Early Childhood Educators takes professional accountability seriously by investigating complaints about members that relate to alleged professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity. Its Complaints Committee reviews complaints and either refers them to the Discipline Committee or Fitness to Practise Committee for a hearing or resolves the matter by other means.

Details of College investigations remain confidential until such time as a case is referred to the Discipline Committee. Complaints Committee decisions are published here solely for educational purposes and do not identify the people involved. Some details have been changed or omitted to preserve confidentiality.

Complaint

The Member entered into a personal relationship with a parent that put her in a conflict of interest. As a result, the relationship created a learning environment that was not nurturing and supportive for a child who was caught in the middle.

Summary

The College received a complaint from the parent of a child enrolled at the centre where the Member had been working as an RECE. The Complainant alleged the Member had entered into a personal relationship with her ex-husband. She believed that this relationship caused her child emotional distress.

The Complainant reported that the Member was interfering with her child's speech therapy, held overnight stays at her house that violated a custody order and made the child feel uncomfortable and distressed while at the centre.

In a written response to the complaint, the Member indicated that she had disclosed her personal relationship to her supervisor and explained that she had never provided direct care to the Complainant's child. The Member further stated she made efforts to facilitate the child's speech therapy using methods she was trained on, and had used with other children under her care. She also explained that she was not aware of the Complainant's custody order or its details.

Relevant Sections of the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (2011)

Standard V: Professional Boundaries, Dual Relationships and Conflicts of Interest

Decision

The Complaints Committee ordered the Member to personally appear before it for a verbal caution. The Complaints Committee noted that, although the Member appeared to have recognized the potential conflict because she had discussed her personal relationship with her supervisor, there was no evidence to suggest that

the Member had consulted the College's *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* or contacted the College directly for guidance. The Committee was also concerned that the Member may not have taken appropriate steps to reduce or eliminate the potential conflict of interest from her personal relationship.

In reviewing the Member's response to the complaint, the Panel was concerned that the Member did not appear to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Standard V: Professional Boundaries, Dual Relationships and Conflicts of Interest. As a result, the Member may not have recognized the potential risk of harm to a child in her professional care.

In its verbal caution the Committee emphasized the potential seriousness of this issue and reminded the Member of the College's expectations in regards to recognizing and reducing conflicts of interest. ■

In the Public Interest

The Discipline Committee hears matters regarding allegations of professional misconduct and/or incompetence. When it makes a finding of guilt, a summary of its decision and reasons must be published in the College's publication, *Connexions*. This section contains the most recent summaries.

How Can I Find Out More Details?

The full decisions are posted on the College's website. There is also a notice below each Member's name on the College's public register. This means that there are permanent, public records of the Committee's decisions.

Georgina Marie Guyett (the "Member"), Certificate of Registration Number: 13770

Discipline Committee Order:

- Four month suspension
- Reprimand
- Coursework
- Restrictions on ability to work as a supervisor or manager

The Member worked at a child care centre. At a hearing on November 14, 2016, a panel of the Discipline Committee found the Member guilty of professional misconduct, among other things, because she had physically abused a child who was under her supervision.

The College and the Member agreed on the important facts of the case and provided the Discipline Committee with a summary. This meant that witnesses did not have to testify. The College and the Member also made a joint submission to the Discipline Committee on what they believed was an appropriate penalty. The Discipline Committee agreed with their joint proposal.

What Did the Member Do?

The Member admitted to restraining children during nap time, grabbing children by the arm, refusing food to a child and leaving a child unsupervised inside the centre during a fire drill.

What Did the Committee Do?

The Committee concluded that the Member engaged in professional misconduct contrary to Ontario Regulation 223/08 (the "Professional Misconduct Regulation"). In so doing, the Committee observed that the Member contravened the profession's *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (2011).

The Committee directed the Registrar to suspend the Member's Certificate of Registration for four months. The Committee also ordered the Member to complete a course on developing supportive interactions with children and a course on stress and anger management, which the Committee stated "is intended to serve as a rehabilitation measure that will provide [the Member] with the tools and resources she needs to succeed as a professional early childhood educator."

Before she can return to work as a registered early childhood educator, the Member must also notify the Registrar and provide her employer with a copy of the Discipline Committee's Decision and Order. The Member's Certificate of Registration was also restricted so that, when the Member does return to work, she cannot work as a supervisor or practise in an independent, unsupervised, or self-employed capacity. These restrictions will remain in place until the Member satisfies the Registrar that she has been engaged in full-time, continuous employment as an RECE for six months and has upheld all of her obligations to the College during that period.

Shawna Lee (Ferguson) (the “Member”), Certificate of Registration Number: 14837**Discipline Committee Order:**

- Revocation of the Member’s Certificate of Registration
- Order to contribute \$16,500 towards the College’s costs in investigating and prosecuting this matter

The Member was a manager of a child care centre. At a hearing on October 7, 2016, a panel of the Discipline Committee found the Member guilty of professional misconduct because she had stolen and wrongfully used funds from the centre. This was the second time that the Member had been found guilty of professional misconduct of this nature.

The Member did not attend the hearing, and she was not represented by a lawyer. As a result, the Committee entered a plea of not guilty on the Member’s behalf.

What Did the Member Do?

The Member’s employer provided evidence (including a financial audit) showing that the Member had, among other things, misappropriated more than \$29,000 from the centre. The Member used the centre’s business credit card and petty cash fund for personal items and took items belonging to the centre.

She also caused the Centre to lose an additional \$30,000 in funds by waiving fees as a way of resolving complaints against her and permitting some clients to pay less fees than they were supposed to.

What Did the Committee Do?

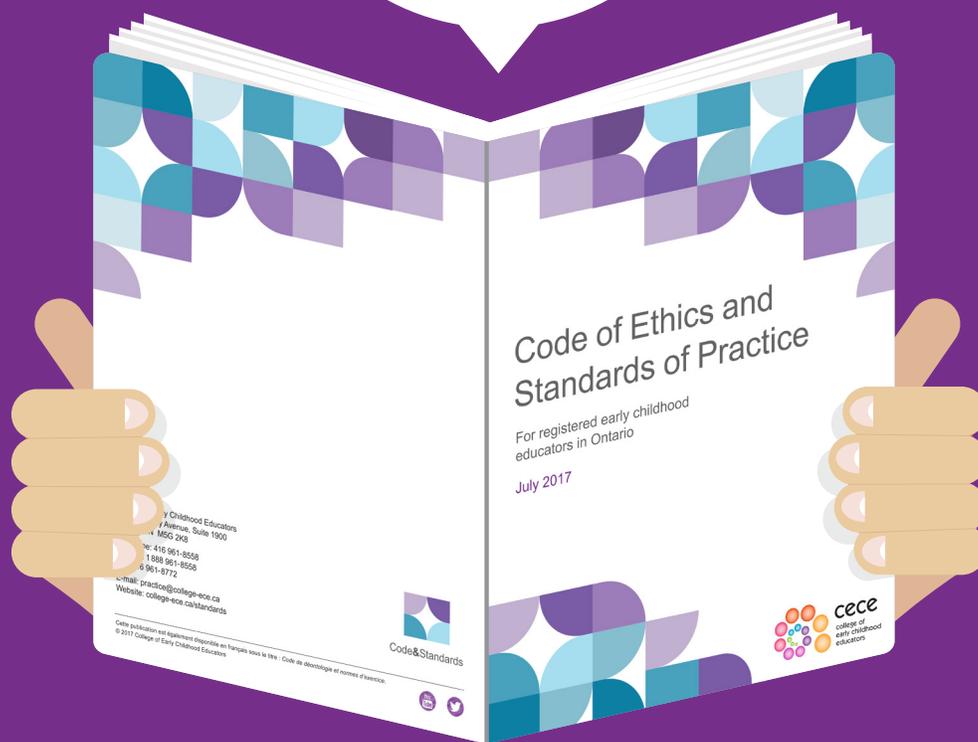
The Committee concluded that the Member had engaged in professional misconduct contrary to Ontario Regulation 223/08 (the “Professional Misconduct Regulation”). In so doing, the Committee observed that the Member had demonstrated “a profound disrespect for the professional and ethical responsibilities assigned to her” and that the Member’s actions caused “a serious negative impact on the child care centre’s families and staff as well as jeopardized the Centre’s reputation within the community and the financial health of the Centre.”

The Committee directed the Registrar to revoke the Member’s Certificate of Registration. The Committee stated in its decision that “a strong message must be sent... that her conduct is not condoned and that the College will apply the most severe penalty when misconduct is found to be this serious.”

The Committee also ordered the Member to pay a portion of the College’s legal costs totaling \$16,500. This amount represents two-thirds of the College’s cost of preparing for and holding the hearing. The Committee stated “the Member behaved in an unprofessional manner by making a choice not to participate in this hearing, which is her professional obligation... Her decision to be a non-participant elevated the cost of this hearing. The College of Early Childhood Educators bears the cost of hearings as they are funded through membership dues. The Committee agrees with Counsel’s proposal that the Membership should not have to pay for an individual’s misconduct.” ■

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