

# Practice Matters



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

Do you have a Professional Practice question? E-mail [practice@college-ece.ca](mailto:practice@college-ece.ca) for more information.



Previous columns of **Practice Matters** can be found on the Professional Practice section of the College's website, [college-ece.ca](http://college-ece.ca)

**Q:** I am the supervisor of a child care centre where a male registered early childhood educator (RECE) works in the toddler room. The parents have asked that he not change their child's diapers. How should I respond to their request?

**A:** It is important to explore why the parents may have made the request. Sometimes, such requests are based on performance issues and should be addressed with the parents and the staff. In others, it could be as a result of the parents' personal views which may relate to gender or factors that are cultural, religious or based on past experiences. Relationships with families are based on trust, openness and respect for confidentiality. Standard I: E of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* states that RECEs "establish professional and caring relationships with children and families."

Assuming gender is the issue, it is important to consider that the parents' personal views may stem from, for example, cultural or religious beliefs, which are recognized as protected grounds under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. In such a case a supervisor would have a duty to ensure that the parents' request is accommodated to the point of undue hardship ("undue hardship" takes into account factors such as cost or health and safety risks). The male RECE has a right to be free from discrimination on the basis of gender in his employment. Since there is no hierarchy of rights under the *Human Rights Code*, you would be required to balance these competing rights with the aim of resolving the concerns in a mutually-satisfactory manner.

It is important to inform the parents that the staff member has been trained in the profession, is registered with the College and is accountable to practise according to the ethical and professional standards that apply to all RECEs. Irrespective of their gender, RECEs are expected to be caring, empathetic, fair and act with integrity when supervising children. Ethic A: Responsibilities to Children states that RECEs "make the well-being and learning of all children who are under their professional supervision their foremost responsibility." ©

## Put it into Practice!

Reflect on a time when a parent may have made a request that did not align with your ethical and professional standards as an RECE. Through self-reflection or with colleagues, brainstorm scenarios where similar requests may be made, and the actions you might take, while considering them from different roles and/or in different contexts. Make connections to the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* while considering the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.