

Professional Supervision of Supervisees

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 guidance.

RECEs hold positions of trust and responsibility, not only with children under their professional supervision, but also with supervisees. Many RECEs working in a variety of roles and settings provide professional supervision of supervisees, so this practice note can apply to all RECEs.



Colleagues working together

You can use this resource to:

- Understand what professional supervision of supervisees involves
- Support supervisees in their practice
- Understand how professional supervision of supervisees can be an opportunity for RECEs to enhance their own professional practice

What is professional supervision of supervisees?

The College defines *supervisee* as any adult who is under an RECE's direct supervision including, but not limited to, the following:

- Other RECEs
- Staff (early childhood assistants, apprentices and administration)
- Students (high school co-op and post-secondary placement)
- Volunteers (students, families and community members)

Professional supervision of a supervisee occurs when an RECE, regardless of title, position or point in their career, holds a position of trust over a supervisee. By drawing on collective knowledge and experiences, you help supervisees solve problems, create solutions and improve professional outcomes for children and families (*Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, 2017*).

Professional supervision responsibilities

Key responsibilities of any RECE providing professional supervision of a supervisee are to:

- Understand the roles and responsibilities of supervisees in the practice setting, and answer any questions they have.
- Establish and clearly communicate realistic expectations regarding responsibility.
- Ensure that emergency procedures and relevant reporting requirements are understood by supervisees.
- Work closely with supervisees to ensure they are familiar with routines and if appropriate, relevant information about the children and families (i.e. allergies, interests and capabilities).
- Continuously monitor the practice setting, the individuals in the practice setting (i.e. children and supervisees) and their actions.
- Take responsibility for your own practice decisions, actions and interactions with supervisees.
- Be accountable for the decisions, actions and interactions of supervisees.
- Consider relevant legislation and policies related to supervisees (i.e. students and volunteers).
- Critically reflect on any conscious and unconscious beliefs and bias that could impact professional supervision.
- Stay current on knowledge related to legislation, learning theories and pedagogical practices, research and trends in the early years sector.
- Develop an understanding of supervisees' unique strengths, areas for growth and challenges to be addressed.



Two colleagues in an early learning environment

Remember, early childhood education placement students and those new to the profession will require extra support and guidance from the RECEs supervising them.

RECEs employed as supervisors

RECEs in formal supervisory roles, such as supervisors, directors or program managers, have additional responsibilities in regards to professional supervision.

These responsibilities include:

- Conducting orientation, training and performance assessments
- Facilitating communication and collaboration
- Assisting with interpersonal challenges and conflict resolution
- Supporting leadership development and mentoring
- Documenting history of accomplishments and challenges



Two colleagues having a discussion

It is important for RECEs employed as supervisors to understand that they may be held to a higher standard by others, including families, colleagues and the College, in regards to their formal positions of supervision of supervisees.

Duty to report

RECEs employed as supervisors must ensure that employer policies and protocols outlining the duty to report are in line with the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* requirements, and that all supervisees are familiar with them. As a supervisor you have a duty to report, but you also have additional responsibilities such as providing support to a supervisee in carrying out their duty to report.

For more information review the [Professional Advisory: Duty to Report](#), as well as, the [Resource and Reflection Guide for the Professional Advisory on Duty to Report](#).

Factors affecting level of supervision

Standard IV: C.8, states that RECEs offer guidance and direction to supervisees that is respectful and fair, and provide a level of supervision that is appropriate based on a supervisee's:

- Education
- Training
- Skills
- Experience
- Roles and responsibilities
- Confidence
- Activities being performed



Colleagues in a meeting

Supervision will also be informed by circumstances in the practice setting. RECEs use their professional judgment regarding the level of supervision (i.e. scaffolding guidance) required to support a supervisee.

For example:

- Addressing diverse groups of children. Some supervisees may have less experience and will require additional guidance.
- Staff illnesses. A supervisor may have to re-arrange staffing schedules. This could result in another RECE being responsible for a supervisee who may be unfamiliar with the routines in the learning setting.
- Unexpected events such as fire drills, illnesses or incidents affecting the children. A supervisee may require support managing or communicating these situations to families.
- First semester early childhood education placement students will require different support than fourth semester students.

Using your professional judgment

Professional judgment is informed by an RECE's ethical and professional standards, their professional knowledge and experience, and their reflective practice. As an RECE, you must exercise your professional judgment when making decisions and taking actions related to the professional supervision of supervisees.

You are responsible for:

- Maintaining professional boundaries. (Standard V: C.1)
- Avoiding dual relationships, or managing them, if unavoidable. (Standard V: B.5)
- Refraining from using your professional position to coerce, improperly influence, harass, abuse or exploit a supervisee. (Standard V: C.2)



Professional judgment graph

These ideas on using professional judgment are revisited with examples in the Professionalism and Accountability section of this Practice Note.

The Professional Misconduct Regulation states that failing to adequately supervise a supervisee who is under the professional supervision of an RECE may be considered professional misconduct; particularly, if the failure to supervise the supervisee led, or could have led, to harm or injury of a child under the professional supervision of the member.

For more information on professional judgment, review the [Practice Note: Professional Judgment](#).

Supporting supervisees in practice

Build effective relationships

A supportive professional culture in the workplace helps ensure programs are responsive to the needs of children and families. By building effective relationships with supervisees, an RECE fosters a culture of mutual support and teamwork.

The Code and Standards highlights ways in which RECEs can build effective relationships:

- Standard I: A; Ethic C – An RECE’s practice is influenced by their ability to build and maintain positive, caring and responsive relationships with their colleagues. These are built upon by demonstrating respect, trust and integrity.
- Standard I: C.6 – To support relationships with supervisees, RECEs use a variety of communication methods and strategies, apply interpersonal skills, respect privacy and confidentiality and establish appropriate boundaries.

Demonstrate and support leadership

As an RECE you are a role model for supervisees. You model professional values, beliefs and behaviours (Standard IV: C.4) and demonstrate leadership and professionalism in your practice by:

- Engaging in your own continuous professional learning to improve and strengthen your professional practice, receive and offer support, and learn from others, including supervisees.

Leadership has many different functions and occurs at many levels in early learning and child care environments. RECEs create opportunities for supervisees to assume formal or informal leadership roles (Standard IV: C.8) and can support supervisees’ leadership development by:

- Asking for and implementing their ideas
- Involving them in decision-making processes
- Supporting them to lead a portion of a staff meeting or learning activity
- Inspiring them to join or create communities of practice
- Encouraging those who want to engage in mentoring

Provide mentorship

Ethic C states that RECEs support, mentor and collaborate with colleagues, including students aspiring to join the profession.

The College developed the [CPL Resource: Mentoring](#), which provides an overview of mentoring in early childhood education. This section highlights important considerations for mentoring, within the context of professional supervision of supervisees.

Generally, early childhood education students complete a placement where RECEs are responsible for supervising them. In some cases, this relationship is referred to as mentoring. The relationship between RECEs and early childhood education placement students is unique. Students are emerging leaders who have new knowledge and skills to put into practice. RECEs act as role models and demonstrate leadership by actively involving students in activities that foster their leadership development, growth and future practice.

For RECEs in both mentoring and supervisory roles, it is important to be aware of the difference between the two roles. “Mentors do not function as supervisors, and do not conduct formal evaluations of their [mentees]” (i.e. supervisees) (Chu, 2014). There are exceptions when mentors will be required to complete evaluations of mentees, such as when an RECE is both a mentor and supervisor of a placement student. If the same person is performing both roles (i.e. evaluations and mentorship) it is important to identify the function being performed at any given time.

If you are an RECE performing both a mentoring and supervisory role, take a minute to reflect on the following questions to ensure that you are maintaining your distinct responsibilities.

- How am I ensuring the mentee / supervisee is aware of the distinction between my two roles?
- What actions am I taking to ensure I am keeping my roles of mentor and supervisor separate?
- Am I providing mentorship to a particular supervisee and not others? If yes, how will I maintain the distinction of mentor and supervisor with this particular supervisee? How will this mentoring relationship affect my strictly supervisory relationship with my other supervisees?

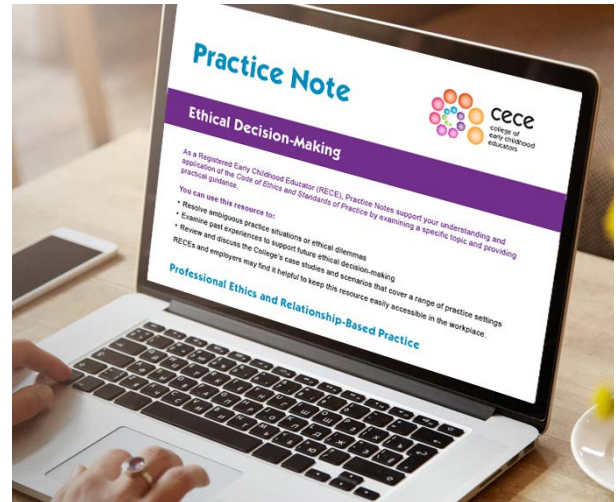


Mentorship word map graph

Demonstrate professionalism and accountability

RECEs demonstrate accountability by taking personal responsibility for their practice decisions, actions and interactions despite the behaviours of colleagues, environmental factors or workplace settings that may impact their practice ([PG: Professionalism](#)).

As an RECE, you will face challenges in your relationships with supervisees such as when unclear or unpredictable practice situations arise. It is critical that you exercise good professional judgment in making difficult decisions. RECEs can help supervisees in resolving ambiguous practice situations or ethical dilemmas by walking them through the ethical decision making process, particularly early childhood education placement students and those who are new to the profession.



Individual reads a document on a laptop

For more information on ethical decision-making, review the [Practice Note: Ethical Decision-Making](#).

Along with their individual accountability, RECEs are part of a collective which supports the accountability of other RECEs. This can include observing, communicating with and guiding supervisees who may be struggling (i.e. interactions with children or colleagues, managing stressful situations).

Standard IV: C.11 states, RECEs are expected to report concerns about professional misconduct, incompetence and incapacity of colleagues which could create a risk to the health or well-being of children or others to the appropriate authorities. This includes reporting to the College if the conduct is that of an RECE. This responsibility ensures that the needs and interests of children are at the forefront and that the standards of the profession are maintained.

Stressful situations in practice are inevitable. Maintaining your own well-being is part of demonstrating professionalism and upholding your ethical values. For more information on the importance of self-care and managing stress in the work environment, review the *Connexions* article: [Stressed at work? You're not alone...](#)

Maintain professional boundaries

Violations of professional boundaries happen when RECEs do not clearly establish and maintain “clear and appropriate boundaries in professional relationships with supervisees” (Standard V: C.1). Blurring professional boundaries can complicate relationships between an RECE and a supervisee. Unclear boundaries can have negative consequences such as causing confusion and conflicting ideas about the supervisory role of the RECE in the relationship with the supervisee.

To maintain professional boundaries, identify and declare dual relationships or conflicts of interest when they arise and take action to prevent harm to children or their families (Standard V: A). An RECE has a dual relationship if they have another relationship, beyond the professional one in the workplace, with a supervisee. Dual relationships increase the risk of boundary violations.

Examples of dual relationships and/or blurring of professional boundaries with supervisees can include:

- the supervisee is a family member
- a supervisee’s child attends the child care centre
- a supervisee provides child minding for the supervisor who is providing professional supervision
- a supervisee sends a social media request to the RECE providing professional supervision
- an RECE consistently shares personal information with a supervisee
- an RECE who is friends with their colleagues becomes the centre supervisor and is responsible for supervising those colleagues

When faced with a practice issue concerning dual relationships, conflict of interests or boundaries with supervisees, you have a responsibility to identify the facts, use your professional judgment, communicate, document and monitor the situation in order to help resolve the issue and prevent impaired professional judgment or professional misconduct.

It is important for RECEs to remember that engaging in an intimate relationship with a supervisee is prohibited under any circumstances.

For more information on dual relationships, review the [Practice Guideline: Dual Relationships](#).

Uphold your position of trust

RECEs build trusting relationships with supervisees by respecting their privacy and the confidentiality of their information. They do not engage in harassment, bullying or activities that marginalize or discriminate against others; all of which may be considered an act of professional misconduct. RECEs have a responsibility to address prohibited behaviours before or as they occur.

As an RECE, you do not use your professional position to coerce, improperly influence, harass, abuse or exploit [...] a supervisee (Standard V: C.2).

In practice, issues relating to abuse of power can include:

- Belittling supervisees either directly or indirectly
- Showing favouritism
- Asking supervisees to withhold from reporting or disclosing incidents that occur in practice, or to modify documents
- Ignoring concerns from supervisees, including early childhood education placement students
- Posting content on social media that negatively impacts a supervisee
- Any behaviour that would lead to professional misconduct

Additional resources

For further opportunities to reflect on your practice and support your professional supervision of supervisees, review and discuss the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* along with the following College resources:

- [Practice Guideline: Professionalism](#)
- [Practice Note: Professional Supervision of Children](#)
- [Case Study #8: Balancing Supervisory Responsibilities](#)
- [Try it at Work – Professionalism and Leadership](#)

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