

Professional Judgment

Practice Notes provide a brief overview of important topics directly related to the practice of early childhood education and offer supporting information to enhance Registered Early Childhood Educators' (RECEs) understanding of them.

The Importance of Using Professional Judgment

Using good professional judgment is an important part of an RECE's daily practice and one of the ways that professionalism is demonstrated and maintained.

The practice of early childhood education will not follow a strict set of rules where knowledge is applied in the same way every day. RECEs, in a range of roles and working environments, must routinely navigate and manage complex, unpredictable and ambiguous practice situations. When there are no clear rules for a course of action, RECEs use their professional judgment to:

- Make difficult decisions.
- Provide ethical and appropriate advice on complex issues.
- Engage in clear communication with others about practice and decision-making processes.
- Take responsibility and be accountable for their practice decisions, actions and interactions with others.
- Support children and families and maintain caring and responsive relationships.

Explaining Professional Judgment

The College of Early Childhood Educators explains professional judgment as being informed by three key areas:

1. Ethical and Professional Standards

RECEs have a legal, ethical and professional obligation to practise according to the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*. The Code and Standards reminds RECEs of the ethical values, professional knowledge and skills expected in their practice. It also support RECEs in their relationships, communications with others and in making ethical and informed practice decisions. Applying the Code and Standards consistently supports the development of appropriate professional judgment.

2. Professional Knowledge and Experience

An RECE's professional knowledge and experience work together to help shape their professional judgment and inform their decision-making. Knowledge may come from education, ongoing professional learning, and awareness of current research, policies or changes in the sector. Experience is the sum of all practical experiences throughout an RECE's education and career. Both knowledge and experience are largely influenced by an RECE's interactions and relationships with children, families, colleagues and mentors. In some situations, additional expertise, research and resources may be required to support the development of good professional judgment.

3. Reflective Practice

Reflective practice also plays a key role in the development of professional judgment. When RECEs think critically about their daily practice and the impact of their choices and actions on children, families and colleagues, they are better able to understand their practice and act to improve it. RECEs also use reflective practice to help them consider their actions before they act. Reflective practice is often deepened and more effective when RECEs work collaboratively with others, especially with colleagues who are part of their practice teams. By using reflective practice and collaboration to plan, evaluate situations, assess risks, make informed decisions and take steps to create change to build on existing knowledge, RECEs increase their capacity to use their professional judgment effectively.



Impaired Professional Judgment

An RECE's professional judgment may become impaired in the following ways:

- Failing to consider the ethical and professional standards, the value of evolving professional knowledge and experience, and the importance of regular engagement in reflective practice.
- Allowing boundaries to blur between professional and personal relationships (Standard V: B.2).
- Engaging in some dual relationships and not taking the steps to appropriately manage or end them.
- Engaging in a conflict of interest.

RECEs avoid these actions to ensure their professional judgment is not impaired and they are making ethical and appropriate decisions in their practice.

Other Factors that Influence Professional Judgment

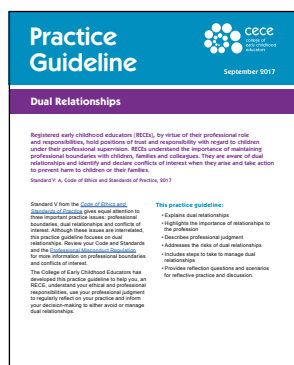
As reflective professionals, RECEs are also mindful of other factors that influence how their professional judgment is formed and used in their practice, such as:

- Personal or cultural beliefs, values, perceptions and biases.
- Employment roles and environments.
- Systemic issues related to the early learning and child care sector.

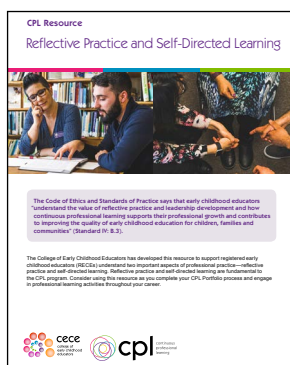
RECEs are aware of the risks that could lead to impaired judgment and other factors that influence and inform their judgment. Ongoing reflective practice as well as supporting, encouraging, communicating and collaborating with colleagues is an important way RECEs ensure they are developing and using sound professional judgment.

Additional Resources

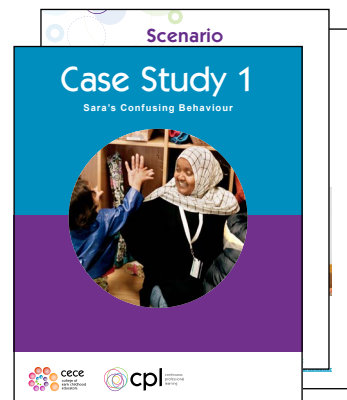
For opportunities to reflect on your practice and improve of your professional judgment review and discuss the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* along with these College resources:



[Practice Guideline: Dual Relationships](#)



[CPL Resource: Reflective Practice and Self-Directed Learning](#)



[Case Studies, Vignettes and Practice Scenarios](#)

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If you require an accessible format and/or communication support, please contact the College at 1 888 961-8558 / communications@college-ece.ca.

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