



Practice Guideline

Child Development

Use this guideline to help you learn about:

- the important role educators and families play in children’s development;
- the unique rights of children and ways of viewing and supporting every child;
- the different factors that influence children’s development;
- the broad patterns associated with development, and how understanding them can help you be attuned and responsive; and
- strategies to co-create diverse and inclusive learning environments that support the children and families in your care.

Introduction

This Practice Guideline supports Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) in understanding and applying the [Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice](#) (Code and Standards) as it relates to children’s development. One of the main responsibilities of an RECE is to understand, promote and support a child’s overall development and well-being.

This responsibility is outlined in the [Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007](#) and defines an RECE’s practice as “the planning and delivery of inclusive play-based learning and care programs for children in order to promote the well-being and holistic development of children.”

Standard I says RECEs are knowledgeable about child development theories and understand that children’s development is integrated across multiple domains and within a variety of contexts and environments (B.1). To uphold their ethical and professional responsibilities, RECEs stay informed about new and evolving information and ways to support children’s well-being, development, learning and health. One way to do this is by accessing research led and informed by the knowledge and experiences of diverse communities. This can help ensure that RECEs gain and strengthen their understanding of the multiple factors that influence the developing child and their surrounding community.

RECEs are reflective, intentional professionals and leaders who engage in continuous professional learning (CPL) (Standard IV). Through self-reflection, collaboration and expanding practice knowledge and skills, RECEs work toward ensuring high-quality early childhood education which includes promoting healthy child development.

This practice guideline is framed around the understanding that children develop at different rates within the contexts of diverse family structures, communities and cultures. It’s also grounded in the idea that educators, families and communities are partners in supporting children’s development. Standard I describes collaborative relationships with families as being essential. It says that RECEs recognize the value and diversity of all families who “are of primary importance in children’s development and well-being. [Children] are best understood in the context of their families, cultures and communities” (Standard I: B.3).

How Does Learning Happen? (HDLH?) (2014) highlights the importance of engaging and working in partnerships with families. “Children are influenced by multiple factors such as the family, social and cultural contexts in which they live and play, their own unique perspectives, and their life experiences” (HDLH?, 2014, pp. 17-18).

The important role of educators and families is also described in *The Kindergarten Program* (2016) which “starts with the understanding that all children’s learning and development occurs in the context of relationships – with other children, parents and other family members, educators, and the broader environment” (p. 9).

RECEs play a vital role in children’s lives – they intentionally collaborate with others and make practice decisions that put children’s best interests at the forefront.

Responsive relationships are directly linked to a child’s well-being and development. 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, B.1).

RECEs are familiar with common developmental domains. These domains, while often discussed independently, are linked as they support and influence one another:

- Social and emotional;
- Communication and language;
- Cognitive; and
- Physical.

For more information about your professional responsibilities related to child development, review the [Practice Note on Child Development](#) (2022) which outlines some of the more familiar and common domains of child development (i.e., physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language and literacy). In comparison, this practice guideline goes more in-depth to explore the nuances of children’s development, including those of the common domains.

Taking global research and information into consideration, this resource highlights factors that influence children’s development. It reminds and encourages you to consider the responsibilities you have to guide all children in their unique development.

- 1**) [Section 1 – children’s rights and the image of the child](#)
- 2**) [Section 2 – factors influencing child development](#)
- 3**) [Section 3 – child development perspectives](#)
- 4**) [Section 4 – identity development](#)
- 5**) [Section 5 – being a leader and an advocate](#)

There were many individuals who shared valuable insights, personal stories and experiences that were included in this practice guide. Thank you for your contributions and support.

About this publication

Practice guidelines communicate certain expectations of Registered Early Childhood Educators as outlined in the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*. Guidelines also highlight how those expectations may be applied in practice. They include recommendations and provide opportunities for self-reflection and professional learning. The Code and Standards, current research and related legislation should be consulted when considering practice guidelines. Practice guidelines support the College's role to promote high standards and continuous professional learning and to govern the conduct of RECEs.

Suggestions for using the Practice Guideline

- Take your time to review the material and additional resources.
- Focus on areas that are most relevant to your current practice or sections that challenge you.
- Engage in collaborative inquiry and critical reflection during a staff or team meeting, or share in a community of practice.
- Actively engage in collaborative discussions to reflect on, challenge and question the complexities of practice.
- Use this resource to support you with your related Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) portfolio goals and activities.

Guideline references

Berman, R., Daniel, B. J., Butler, A., McNevin, M. & Royer, N., (2017). [Nothing, or Almost Nothing, to Report: Early Childhood Educators and Discursive Constructions of Colorblindness](#). *International Critical Childhood Policy Studies Journal*, 6(1), 62-65.

Balter et al., 2021a – Balter, A.S., van Rhijn, T., Gores, D., Davies, A.W.J, & Akers, T. (2021). Supporting the development of sexuality in early childhood: The rationales and barriers to sexuality education in early learning settings. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 30(3), 287-295. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjhs.2021-0034>

Balter et al., 2021b – Balter, A.S., Gores, D., van Rhijn, T., Katz, J., Kassies, I., Gleason, M., & Joseph, J. (2021). An outcome evaluation of a professional development opportunity focusing on sexuality education for early learning professionals. *eceLINK*, 5(1), 18-32. Retrieved from: [An Outcome Evaluation of a Professional Development Opportunity.pdf \(nationbuilder.com\)](#)

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2019). [Early Learning Framework](#).

Clinton, J. (2013). [The Power of Positive Adult Child Relationships: Connection is the Key](#). *Think, feel, act: Lessons from research about young children*, 5-10. Ontario Ministry of Education.

Clinton, J. (2014). [Brain Development: Quality of interactions](#). [Video]. Ontario Ministry of Education.

Clinton, J. (2020). [Returning to On-site Work](#). [Video]. College of Early Childhood Educators.

College of Early Childhood Educators. (2017). [Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice](#).

College of Early Childhood Educators. (2018). [Practice Note on Play-Based Learning](#).

- College of Early Childhood Educators. (2019). [*Practice Guideline on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities*](#).
- College of Early Childhood Educators. (2020). [*Practice Guideline on Diversity and Culture*](#).
- Early Childhood Peace Consortium. [*The Lancet 2017 Series - Advancing early childhood development: From science to scale*](#).
- Education Scotland. (2020). [*Realizing the ambition: Being me - National practice guidance for early years in Scotland*](#).
- Ehrensaft, D. (2016). [*The Gender Creative Child: Pathways for Nurturing and Supporting Children Who Live Outside Gender Boxes*](#). New York: The experiment press.
- Farley, L., Sonu, D., Garlen, J., & Chang-Kredl, S. (April 27, 2021) [*How teachers remember their own childhoods affects how they challenge school inequities*](#). *The Conversation*.
- Gillespie, L. (March 24, 2017). [*It takes two It Takes Two: The Role of Co-Regulation in Building Self-Regulation Skills*](#). *Zero to Three*.
- Government of Canada (2018). [*Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework*](#).
- Government of Canada. (September 13, 2018). [*Some facts on the Canadian Francophonie*](#).
- Greenwood, M., & De Leeuw, S.N. (2012). [*Social determinants of health and the future well-being of Aboriginal children in Canada*](#). *Pediatric Child Health*, 17(7), 381-384.
- Greenwood, M., (2005). [*Children as citizens of First Nations: Linking Indigenous health to early childhood development*](#). *Pediatric Child Health*, 10(9), 553-555.
- James, A. (2020). [*Becoming a capable child*](#). In McCain, M.N., *Early Years Study 4*, 71-74.
- Janmohamed, Z. (2010). [*Queering early childhood studies: Challenging the discourse of developmentally appropriate practice*](#). *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 56(3), 304-318.
- Karetak, J., Tester, F. & Tagalik, S. (2017). [*Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: What Inuit Have Always Known to be True*](#). Fernwood Publishing.
- Langford, R. (2010). [*Critiquing Child-Centred Pedagogy to Bring Children and Early Childhood Educators into the Centre of a Democratic Pedagogy*](#), *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 11(1), 113-127.
- Malaguzzi, L. (1994). [*Your image of the child: Where teaching begins*](#). *Exchange*, 3, 52–56.
- McCain, M.N. (2020). [*Play with Purpose*](#). In *Early Years Study 4*, 15-24.
- Moss, P. (2004). [*Dedicated to Loris Malaguzzi: The town of Reggio and its schools*](#). *Refocus Journal*, 22-25.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2020). [*Position statement on developmentally appropriate practice*](#).
- Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities. (2018). [*Early Childhood Education Program Standard*](#).
- Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). [*Think, feel, act: Lessons from research about young children*](#).
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). [*How does learning happen? Ontario's pedagogy for the early years*](#).
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). [*An introduction to how does learning happen? Ontario's pedagogy for the early years for leaders*](#).
- Ontario Ministry of Education (2016). [*The kindergarten program 2016*](#).

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2017). [*Starting Strong*](#).

Osgood, J. & Robinson, K.H. (2017). [*Celebrating Pioneering and Contemporary Feminist Approaches to the Study of Gender in Early Childhood*](#). In *Feminists Researching Gendered Childhoods: Generative Entanglements*, pp. 1-22. London: Bloomsbury.

Pyne, J. (2014). [*Gender independent kids: A paradigm shift in approaches to gender non-conforming children*](#). *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 23(1), 1-8.

Rose, P. A. (2011). [*Schools, hegemony and children's agency: A sociological study with children on their schooling experiences*](#). University of Wollongong.

Rozon, P. (2018). [*Cultivating a Francophone Identity in French-Language Before and After School Programs*](#). *Think, feel, act: Empowering Children in the Middle Years*, p. 1-12. Ontario Ministry of Education.

Shankar, S. (2013). [*Calm, Alert and Happy*](#). *Think, feel, act: Lessons from research about young children*, p. 21-26. Ontario Ministry of Education.

Toulouse, P.R. (2018). [*Each Child Brings a Special Gift: Nurturing Indigenous Identity and Belonging*](#). *Think, feel, act: Empowering Children in the Middle Years*, p. 1-9. Ontario Ministry of Education.

Trans Student Educational Resources. (2015). [*The Gender Unicorn*](#).

United Nations. (2013). [*Convention on the Rights of the Child*](#).

United Nations. (1989). [*Convention on the Rights of the Child*](#).

World Health Organization. (2020). [*Improving early childhood development: WHO Guideline*](#).

World Health Organization. (2018). [*Nurturing care for early childhood development*](#).

College resources

[*Statement of Commitment to Anti-Racism*](#) (2020)

[*Practice Guideline on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities*](#) (2020)

[*Practice Guideline on Supporting Positive Interactions with Children*](#) (2016)

[*Practice Note on Beliefs and Biases*](#) (2022)

[*Practice Note on Ethical Decision-Making*](#) (2019)

[*Practice Note on Professional Judgment*](#) (2018)

[*Professional Advisory on Duty to Report*](#) (2019)

[*Reflection Guide on Beliefs and Biases*](#) (2022)

[*Reflection Guide on Duty to Report*](#) (2019)

Other resources

Abawi, Z & Berman, R. (2019). [*Politicizing Early Childhood Education and Care in Ontario: Race, Identity and Belonging*](#). *Journal of Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Leadership in Education*, 4(2), 4-13.

Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario. (May 4, 2020). [*Une perspective de construction identitaire francophone*](#).

- Best Start. (2008). [How to Reach Francophones: Maternal and Early Years Programs](#). Health Nexus.
- Canadian Mental Health Association. [Social Determinants of Health](#).
- Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. (2017). [24-Hour Movement Guidelines](#).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Adverse Childhood Experiences](#).
- Centre on the Developing Child. [What is Early Childhood Development: A Guide to the Science](#). Harvard University.
- Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development. [Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development](#). Université de Montréal.
- Government of Canada. (November 14, 2017). [Rights of Children](#).
- Government of Canada. (June 14, 2022). [Social determinants of health and health inequalities](#).
- Halton Region. [Healthy Living, Healthy Children: Helping Children to Eat Healthy, Be Active and Feel Good about Themselves](#).
- Ineese-Nash, N. (2020). [View of Disability as a Colonial Construct: The Missing Discourse of Culture in Conceptualizations of Disabled Indigenous Children](#). *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 9(3).
- Nxumalo, F. (2021). [Decolonial Water Pedagogies](#). *Bank Street Occasional Paper Series*, 2021(45). Bank Street College.
- Toronto Public Health. [Sexual Health Promotion - Support for Parents and Caregivers](#).
- Trans Student Educational Resources. (2015). [The Gender Unicorn](#).
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#).

Pause and Reflect exercises from each section

Section 1

- Children as capable and active citizens ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))

Section 2

- Concept of children's autonomy ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))
- Supporting wellness ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))

Section 3

- What you've learned about child development ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))
- The meaning of 'typical' development ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))
- Your lived experiences ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))

Section 4

- How bias can influence practice ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))

Section 5

- Equitable policies and practices ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))
- Dwayne's experience ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))

Practice Scenarios from section 4

- *My hair, my crown! The following days* ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))
- *My name is Sanjiv* ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))
- *Look at me!* ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))
- *Mariam wears a hijab, too!* ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))
- *A social gender transition* ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))
- *From smiles to tears* ([Word](#) | [PDF](#))