



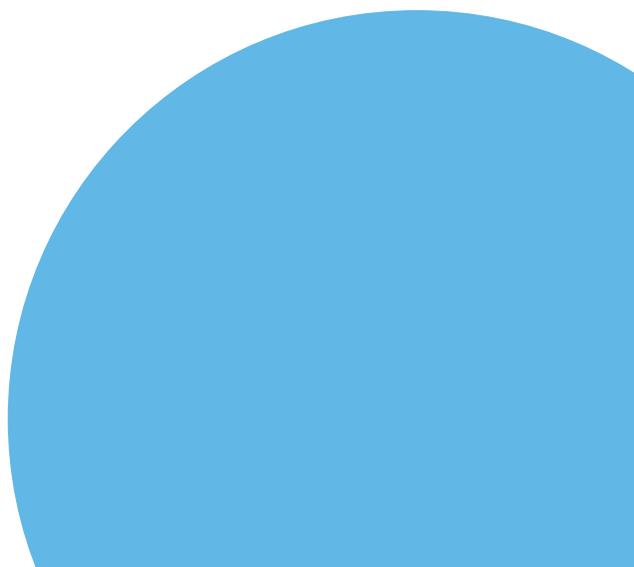
NATIONAL

AfterSchool

ASSOCIATION

**CODE OF ETHICS**  
**FOR**  
**OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROFESSIONALS**

National AfterSchool Association  
Revised 2022



# Introduction

NAA has provided leadership in fostering positive youth outcomes by supporting, developing, and advocating for Out-of-School Time professionals and leaders-in partnership with our State Affiliates—for over 35 years. Over time, the Out-of-School Time (OST) field has made great strides in research, practice, and policies. The research clearly shows that skilled and knowledgeable program staff are the linchpin to the program quality that leads to positive youth outcomes.

The NAA Code of Ethics for OST Professionals was first published in 2009 then reviewed with an equity lens and revised in 2022. The purpose is to raise awareness of OST professional personal commitments to ethical conduct as we carry out our responsibilities.

Ethics broadly refers to behaviors and guidelines that distinguish right from wrong. We recognize that individual and cultural differences may influence how each member of our field would define ethical practices. There are also fundamental truths, such as integrity or avoiding harm, that are critical to the entire youth development field, regardless of the community served, geographic location, or other factors. Moreover, ethics are not limited to individuals. Organizations, field leaders, and funders have a responsibility in creating the conditions in which to practice ethical standards.

This Code of Ethics:

1. supports the highest standards of integrity and honesty in all public and personal activities to inspire public confidence and trust in the afterschool profession;
2. provides guidance and a common set of principles that guide ethical decision-making strategies of OST professionals to promote consistency across the field and to ensure safe, nurturing environments and positive relationships;
3. sets forth a set of principles related to working in OST with children and youth, families, colleagues, and community and society.

These principles are a framework for the conduct of the OST professional and provide guidance when ethical dilemmas occur. It is understood that the OST professional needs to combine the principles of ethical conduct with sound judgment. Note: The Code of Ethics is not meant to be a substitute for established organizational policies and procedures or replace building the core knowledge, skills, and competencies this work necessitates.

To maintain the best interest of young people, OST professionals are encouraged to use the Code of Ethics to guide actions in their daily work and when faced with ethical dilemmas.

# BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

- Ethical dilemmas will occur.
- The manner in which ethical situations are handled has a direct impact on the individuals involved.
- Real life ethical dilemmas are rarely easy. Sometimes, the best ethical course of action to take is not obvious. One important value may contradict another. It is our professional responsibility to work with those involved to find the most ethical action to take.

# KEY DEFINITIONS

## **AFTERSCHOOL OR OUT- OF-SCHOOL TIME**

before school, after school, school vacations/holidays, and summer.

## **AFTERSCHOOL OR OUT- OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAM**

any organized program provided for children and youth ages 5-18 during a time when they are not in school.

## **AFTERSCHOOL OR OUT- OF-SCHOOL TIME PROFESSIONALS**

those individuals who work directly with or on-behalf of young people ages 5-18 during OST in program, school, community, system, and policy-focused settings.

## **ETHICS**

the responsibility to intentionally choose what is right, moral and just in practice and in principle.

## **FAMILY**

persons who are responsible for the child/youth and who the child/youth identifies as having significant impact in their lives.

## **PRINCIPLES**

fundamental truths or propositions that serve as the foundation for a system of beliefs or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.

## **PRACTICE**

systematically putting the principles into action.

# 15 PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR OST PROFESSIONALS

At our best, OST professionals:

1. Demonstrate the highest standards of conduct, accountability, trustworthiness, integrity, fairness, and consideration of others in all practices.
2. Base professional relationships with young people, families, and others on trust, respect, and acceptance.
3. Communicate openly and clearly, and respect and protect confidentiality.
4. Commit to their own learning and professional development.
5. Continuously grow as inclusive and antiracist professionals valuing and celebrating the identities of all people.
6. Design environments and activities based on the knowledge science of learning and development and understanding of how children and youth grow and learn.
7. Develop programs and services that strive to build a strong community among children and youth where play and learning are maximized, children and youth have power and are supported in using it, self-esteem and maturity are guided, and social-emotional skills including self-discipline and self-advocacy are taught and encouraged.
8. Support opportunities that enhance individual uniqueness, safe choices, critical thinking, creativity, curiosity, and a love of learning.
9. Recognize that children and youth and others achieve their full potential when supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society.
10. Appreciate, support, and respect healthy family relationships.
11. Advocate for young people, their families, and themselves as professionals in the field and support others in doing the same.
12. Recognize how personal values, opinions, and biases affect professional judgment and seek ways to minimize and overcome unhelpful narratives as necessary to get to the best possible outcome for children and youth.
13. Strive toward building the Core Knowledge, Skills, And Competencies For OST Professionals outlined by NAA to maximize program quality and positive youth outcomes.
14. Embrace the principles of the NAA Code of Ethics for OST Professionals.
15. Respect OST colleagues and support them in maintaining the NAA Code of Ethics for OST professionals.

Above all we will bring NO harm to any young person. We will participate in practices that respect and do not discriminate against any young person by denying benefits, giving special advantages or excluding from program activities on the basis of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, language, ability, political affiliation, or their status, behavior or family beliefs.