

CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR TEACHERS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

On Behalf of the Board of Directors of the Division for Communication, Language,
and Deaf/Hard of Hearing

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The Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) Division for Communication, Language, and Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DCD) recognizes that those who work with infants, children, and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing face decisions that have ethical implications for trust, respect, care, and integrity. The *Code of Ethical Conduct for Teachers of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing* and *the Commitment to Professional Practice* were developed to address issues of ethics. The Deaf/Hard of Hearing Specialty Sets to CEC's Professional Preparation Standards were the foundation for the creation of these documents.

The *Code of Ethical Conduct* provides guidelines for those who support infants, children, and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. The primary focus of the Code is on professional practices, including assessment; school placement; service delivery models; cultural orientation; communication modalities; language options; and social-emotional support systems with infants, children, youth, and their families from birth through post-secondary years. These guidelines apply to all personnel who may work with children who are deaf or hard of hearing, including early interventionists; service coordinators; general education teachers; deaf education teachers; principals; program administrators; parent educators; early childhood educator; adult educators; related service providers such as speech-language

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pathologists, audiologists, and educational interpreters; and officials with responsibility for program monitoring and licensing.

The *Code of Ethical Conduct* addresses five areas of ethical responsibilities that are influenced by the beliefs, actions, and general professional practices of the teacher of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The focus of the Code is on the child, as a student served by the teacher of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The ethical practices also focus on the child and family; the community and culture supporting the growth and maturation of the child; and colleagues and collaborators providing specialized services that assist in promoting child development, communication, and learning. Finally, the Code focuses on the teacher of students who are deaf or hard of hearing as a professional pursuing lifelong learning.

The *Commitment to Professional Practice* is a personal acknowledgement of an individual's willingness to fulfill and promote the highest values and ideals of the field of education for infants, children, and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing. Commitment to these values and ideals impacts the capacity to promote professional advocacy and growth.

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ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES

CHILD

Hearing status impacts language and communication acquisition, resulting in unique communication, language, academic, and social-emotional needs. Infants, children, and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing “require specialized...instruction to develop...pragmatic as well as academic language and communication skills” (Commission on Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans, 2015, p.4). Therefore, it is critical that we provide environments that nurture and enhance comprehensive language and communication opportunities supporting self-determination and independence.

Effective teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Address all aspects of children's development and the impact of hearing status, regardless of level, on educational outcomes that include:
 - Birth to five years: supporting IFSP goals that maximize children’s communication and learning potential to begin kindergarten with developmentally appropriate language, communication, social-emotional, early literacy, and advocacy skills.
 - School age: supporting IEP goals for equal access to instruction and participation in school-sponsored activities and providing opportunities for direct and accessible interaction with peers; utilizing effective instructional and linguistic strategies to meet educational standards; promoting self-determination and development of self-advocacy skills, encouraging and supporting their personal choices.

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- Transition/ Post School Life: maximizing students' potential for self-advocacy, employment, education/training, and independent living; and providing information and resource connections for employment and training.
- Carry out the principles outlined in the [Bill of Rights for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children](#) and the fundamental communication rights in the [Communication Bill of Rights](#) by:
 - Including the child in making language and communication decisions.
 - Learning about and being aware of students' significant risk factors and state mandated reporting protocols; reporting maltreatment and helping prevent the maltreatment of infants, children, and youth by incorporating safety objectives into IFSP and IEP documents.
- Practice informed strategies nurturing infants, children, youth and families who have experienced trauma.

FAMILY

Hearing status impacts the family. The language, communication, academic, and social-emotional needs of an infant, child, or youth who is deaf or hard of hearing necessitates that families continually make decisions regarding their child's language development, communication access, including at home and in the community, peer relationships, and education. Thus, educators must demonstrate sensitivity when informing, supporting, and collaborating with families as they navigate their journey.

Effective teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Respect family diversity and perspectives in the decision-making process and when necessary, advocate, using impartial ethical practices;
- Support and nurture partnerships with families;
- Provide information and resources to families that are balanced and respectful of family decisions;
- Respect and honor families' decisions regarding communication and education;

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- Prepare families for transitions throughout their child's education and post-secondary opportunities;
- Mentor families to advocate for their child's needs; and
- Demonstrate interpersonal and cultural competence, including deaf culture.

COLLEAGUES

Colleagues and teams of professionals work collaboratively to support infants, children, and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. The complementary strengths of these professionals can address the unique needs of individual students. A collaborative climate and communities of professional practice are critical to maximizing the infant's, child's, or youth's development.

Effective teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Maintain relationships based on respect, trust, and integrity;
- Respect the methodology and pedagogy of colleagues;
- Advocate for the child and family while encouraging the use of high leverage practices;
- Demonstrate interpersonal and intrapersonal competence;
- Engage in collaborative partnerships in response to the needs of the child, family, and team;
- Provide resources and facilitate discourse that go beyond traditional roles or experiences;
- Demonstrate commitment to the profession by participating in a personal learning community; and
- Practice collegiality.

COMMUNITY

The community includes an array of resources including family (nuclear and extended), friends, Deaf/Hard of Hearing communities, professionals, para-professionals, agencies, and medical

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services that impact infants, children, and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. The teacher of students who are deaf or hard of hearing should assist the child and family in navigating access to community partners.

Effective teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Engage in relationships to develop and refine programs that benefit infants, children, and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families;
- Facilitate accessibility to a full spectrum of agency and community services;
- Respect all philosophies, modalities, cultures, and communities; and
- Recognize sociocultural, historical, and political considerations that are unique to infants, children, and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families.

SELF

It is essential to engage in professional advocacy, lifelong learning, and continual reflection. The teacher of students who are deaf or hard of hearing must also strive to maintain professionalism in all aspects of their practice.

Effective teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Continually assess personal experiences, bias, and beliefs that may influence their professional judgment;
- Continually strive to increase their skills in languages and modalities, such as American Sign Language, cued speech, and instructional practices emphasizing listening and spoken language;
- Advocate for their professional role and recognize limitations of professional experience and expertise;
- Adhere to the professional standards set forth by state and professional organizations;
- Pursue and apply professional development opportunities;
- Practice reflective teaching;
- Participate in professional organizations and contribute to the profession;

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- Mentor colleagues and model leadership;
- Maintain confidentiality; and
- Practice self-care and advocate for a reasonable workload.

**COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
FOR TEACHERS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF/HARD OF HEARING**

As a professional who supports infants, children, and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families, I pledge my willingness to uphold the *Code of Ethical Conduct for Teachers of Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing* and *Commitment to Professional Practice*.

I will:

- Support positive outcomes for children, families, colleagues, community, and self;
- Nurture relationships with children, families, colleagues, and community;
- Respect cultural diversity and choices of children, families, colleagues, and communities;
- Promote and practice impartiality regarding methodologies and educational options;
- Provide families with the tools to navigate the educational environment;
- Demonstrate collaborative flexibility;
- Utilize evidence-based and high-leverage practices;
- Be aware of, report, and prevent maltreatment of infants, children, and youth through the inclusion of the "[Protective Factors to Promote Well-Being](#)"; and
- Practice reflective teaching and lifelong learning.