



Code of Ethics for Jewish Educators

Prepared by the ועד הכבוד Vaad HaKavod of the Jewish Educators Assembly

Preamble

Recognizing the importance of ethical conduct, many professions and educational organizations have adopted codes of ethics for practitioners. The Vaad HaKavod of the Jewish Educators' Assembly believes that Jewish Education as a profession rightfully merits having such a Jewish Educators' Code of Ethics. This Code does not replace the stipulations in the "Model Contract for Educators" (www.jewisheducators.org) or "Crafting a Contract Between the Synagogue and the Professional" (available on line at uscj.org), but it is meant to complement them. As the Model Contract notes: "The dignity of the profession is essential to the endeavor of Jewish Education."

Purpose of the Code: The Jewish Educators' Code of Ethics strives to improve the quality of Jewish Education by creating a sense of professionalism and personal responsibility for ethical conduct among Jewish Educational professionals and by drawing attention to unethical and potentially harmful practices. The Code provides standards for professional conduct.

In addition to standards of conduct designated in this code, Educators are expected to become familiar with the legal requirements of their state and they must follow such local mandates.

The JEA believes that a commitment to the highest ethical standards will help to improve the quality of Jewish Educational leadership. It will accomplish this by:

- Building an awareness of ethical issues in Jewish Education
- Educating its members on these issues
- Widely disseminating the Code of Ethics to its members

Core Values of the Code

וְעָשִׂיתָ הַטּוֹב וְהַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי ה' *V'asita ha-yashar v'ha-tov b'inei hashem*--You shall do what is right and good in God's eyes. (Deut. 6:18)

Jewish tradition has always maintained as an ideal the highest human ethical conduct: (מצוות בין אדם לחברו *mitzvot bein adam l'haveiro*). The Code of Ethics affirms and articulates the highest values, beliefs, and professional conduct for Jewish Educators.

These values include:

- Respect for the worth of every human being (*צלם א-להים/כבוד הבריות tzelem Elohim/ kevod habriyot*)
- Commitment to be truthful, honest, fair, and just (*אמת/צדק/יושר emet/tzedek/yosher*)
- Devotion to the Jewish education of each child (*ושיננתם לבניך/תלמוד תורה v'shinantam l'vanecha/talmud Torah*)

The Code of Ethics represents the concrete expression of these values in the daily work of Jewish Educators.

I. Principle 1: Commitment to the Student

1. The Jewish Educator should strive to help each student realize his or her potential as a learner and as a Jew. The Jewish Educator therefore works to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge, and the fostering of understanding among all students consistent with the highest standards of educational quality.
2. The Jewish Educator should ensure that every element of school life and climate reflects the principles of justice, equity, and the dignity of each individual.
3. The Jewish Educator should ensure equal access of all students to full participation in any program offered by the school
4. The Jewish Educator should not disclose private information about students obtained in the course of professional service unless such disclosure is expressly authorized by the student's parents, serves a compelling educational purpose, or is required by law.
5. The Jewish Educator should not engage in physical contact with students when there is a possibility of psychological or physical harm as a result of the contact, nor use derogatory language with students.
6. The Jewish Educator should seek training to recognize the signs and indications of child abuse.

7. The Jewish Educator must report physical or sexual abuse to their local department of youth and families when there is reasonable suspicion of such abuse. The Jewish Educator is required to comply with local laws in this regard.

II. Principle 2: Commitment to Colleagues and Co-workers

1. The Jewish Educator should work collaboratively with other professionals, being cognizant that community (קהילה/צבור/כלל ישראל *kehillah/tzibbur/klal Yisrael*) has always been at the core of Jewish life.
2. The Jewish Educator should work towards his/her highest potential, while always maintaining sensitivity to the strengths and weaknesses of colleagues.
3. The Jewish Educator should treat colleagues with respect. He/she should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues, and should not disclose information about colleagues obtained in the course of professional service unless such disclosure is permitted by the colleague, serves compelling professional purpose, or is required by law.
4. The Jewish Educator should not engage in physical contact with colleagues when there is a possibility of psychological or physical harm as a result of the contact, nor use derogatory language with colleagues.
5. The Jewish Educator should adhere to commitments and promises made to staff.
6. In evaluating staff, the Jewish Educator should perform such evaluations in a fair and considerate manner based on clearly stated criteria. When a staff member's employment is in question, the Jewish Educator should devote sufficient attention and resources to ensure that the situation is resolved or that the staff member's departure is handled with attention to fairness and the dignity of the individual.

III. Principle 3: Commitment to Competence and to the Profession

1. The Jewish Educator should strive to be a role model in his/her daily life, both in and out of the work place, and maintain appropriate professional behavior.
2. When serving an institution of the Conservative Movement, the Jewish Educator should support the ideology and practices of Conservative Judaism.
3. The Jewish Educator should continuously strive to improve his or her own knowledge and skills through study (לימוד *limud*) and professional development.
4. The Jewish Educator should always behave in a trustworthy manner. The Jewish Educator should not participate in, condone or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception.
5. The Jewish Educator should not misrepresent his/her professional qualifications.

6. The Jewish Educator should ensure an equitable distribution of resources, both human and financial, to accomplish the goals of his/her school.
7. The Jewish Educator should conduct him/herself in a manner that avoids conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict, including not accepting any gratuity, gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or actions.
8. The Jewish Educator should abide by the guidelines for placement established by the JEA in cooperation with the USCJ, and should not engage in any actions which undermine or compete with the placement process.
9. The Jewish Educator should not enter into discussions relative to a position occupied by another colleague unless that colleague has officially indicated resignation from that position, or has been officially notified of contract termination. (see Model Contract Sec. 6 (4))
10. Contract disputes between an Educator and a congregation or school which cannot be resolved by the participants should be brought to the USCJ Committee on Congregational Standards (See “Crafting a Contract Between the Synagogue and the Professional”).

IV. Harassment and Discrimination Prevention

1. In keeping with the highest ethical standards, the Jewish Educator will not physically, verbally or sexually harass or abuse students, staff, or colleagues.
2. The Jewish Educator will provide a work environment in which employees are free from harassment or discrimination based on race, age, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, mental or physical disability, religion, color or veteran status. The Educator will ensure that an appropriate harassment policy is established at his/her institution.
3. The JEA will not allow discrimination or harassment of its members. The prohibition also applies to conduct at any function sponsored by the JEA.
4. If you believe that you, or another member of the JEA has been subjected to sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, age, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, mental or physical disability, religion, color or veteran status by another member of the JEA; or if an incident of harassment or discrimination occurred at a JEA sponsored function, you should promptly report the incident(s) verbally or in writing to the Vaad HaKavod or to the JEA Executive Director.

The Vaad HaKavod will investigate the allegations and if discrimination or harassment is found to have occurred, will recommend to the JEA Officers to take action which may result in discipline including loss of membership in the JEA. No JEA member will be

retaliated against for making a good faith claim of harassment or discrimination. In addition, no JEA member will be retaliated against for participating in or assisting with an investigation of harassment or discrimination.

5. Definitions:

- A. Discrimination occurs when an individual treats another individual (or group of individuals) less favorably in the workplace because of race, age, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, mental or physical disability, religion, color, or veteran status.
- B. Harassment is unwelcome language, graphics or conduct which makes fun of or demeans an individual or group of individuals because of race, age, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, mental or physical disability, religion, color, or veteran status. The form of demeaning behavior can be verbal, (either written or oral), visual (including computer output) or physical. It is unlawful for males to sexually harass females or other males, and for females to sexually harass males or other females. Sexual harassment covers a range of behaviors including but not limited to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

V. Implementation of Code

In cases of severe infraction of ethical or professional conduct, The Vaad Ha-Kavod may recommend disciplinary action. Such action, which may range from reprimand, censure or placement penalty, to loss of membership in the JEA, is governed by the rules set out in Article III, section 6 of the JEA By Laws:

If a member of the JEA by public or private conduct shall be reported to have rendered him or herself unworthy of membership, the Vaad Hakavod (professional ethics committee) shall investigate such matters and report its findings to the Officers of the JEA. Such charges may be submitted in writing and the member shall have ample opportunity to defend him/herself. A 2/3 vote of the Officers present and voting is necessary to uphold the charge. The Officers may then impose such discipline and penalty as is deemed appropriate. The decision may be appealed to the full Board and with a 2/3 vote of those present and voting, the decision may be repealed.

The JEA retains the right to suspend or revoke membership for cause.

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