



YouthWorkAndYou.org

Victoria University, Australia
in collaboration with
Ulster University, Northern Ireland

Unit 3

Human Rights and Ethics in Professional Youth Work

Codes of Ethics

YouthWorkAndYou.org is brought to you by the Youth Work eLearning Partnership [YWeLP], an Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership 2017-2019.

Introduction

Code of Ethics

Welcome to Unit 3: **Code of Ethics**, a Code of Ethics as framework of best practice for Youth Workers. This unit provides you with a short introductory video, information about the topic, the opportunity to reflect on your own practice as a youth worker and finally a call to action.

This unit will encourage you to consider the importance of continuing to professionalise the Youth Work sector by ensuring that the Code of Ethics underpins all youth work practice in your community.

Please watch the Unit 3 video before proceeding further.

A photograph of a modern university building with a large sign that reads "VICTORIA UNIVERSITY" in bold, blue, sans-serif capital letters. The building is made of light-colored bricks and has a blue and white geometric pattern on its facade. The sky is clear and blue.

Setting the Scene

In Unit 1, we explored human rights and the importance of youth workers upholding the human rights of the young people. Human rights education is one way of teaching young people how to use their voice and make positive contributions in community.

In Unit 2, ethics and ethical decision making was introduced. Using an ethical dilemma, the youth worker Dylan worked through the scenario using the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria's Code of Ethical Practice as a framework to decide on the best course of action.



In Unit 3, we will examine a youth work Code of Ethics and the role that this document plays in best practice. A Code of Ethics is simply a document that outlines an agreed set of values and standards for practice. Sometimes a Code is written into legislation, other times it is a voluntary framework.

For a Youth Work Code of Ethics to be effective in meeting the needs of young people, however, the document must be relevant, current and easily accessible for all adults working with young people, as well as

to the young people themselves. For this reason, shared ownership by young people and youth workers in the sector is vital for the establishment and implementation of a Youth Work Code of Ethics.

There is a strong argument across the globe that Youth Work needs to continue the campaign to professionalise. Youth work needs to be seen by others as a distinct profession with the highest calibre of qualified staff to deliver quality services for the best outcomes for young people. For this to happen, youth workers need to have the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge with accredited tertiary qualifications, be connected to a professional association who will advocate for the needs of the sector and to have a Code of Ethics that is entrenched in youth work practice throughout the community.

This unit provides examples of different Code of Ethics from around the world. There are many similarities between the Codes and there are differences, however underneath all of the documents is the shared desire to see young people grow, develop and flourish as active citizens and agents of change.

What you will learn

Unit 3 Code of Ethics covers the following learning outcomes:

- An understanding of the purpose and process of establishing a Code of Ethics through the Australian case study example.
- A knowledge of the different Youth Work Codes of Ethics around the globe.
- An understanding of how a Code of Ethics can assist to professionalize the Youth Work sector.
- The ability to reflect on one's practice and seek out further information.

Unit 3 Contents



1. An understanding of the purpose and process of establishing a Code of Ethics through the Australian case study example.

This module interviews Dr. Tim Corney who was instrumental in the development of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria's Code of Ethical practice. He talks about the process of consulting with stakeholders and ensuring that the Code was underpinned by a human rights framework. You have the opportunity to reflect on your own Code of Ethics and how it drives your practice.

2. A knowledge of the different Youth Work Codes of Ethics around the globe.

There are several different approaches that countries have taken to establish a youth work code of ethics. The links page will show you examples of European countries and Commonwealth countries Codes of practice.

3. An understanding of how a Code

of Ethics can assist to professionalize the Youth Work sector.

The history of youth work in many countries has been grounded in charity work and volunteering. As a result, there has been a campaign over recent years to professionalise the sector. Professionalisation occurs through providing quality tertiary youth work qualifications, consistency in service delivery, the strength of professional youth workers associations and implementing a code of ethics.

4. The ability to reflect on one's practice and seek out further information.

This module encourages the practice of self-reflection in all learning activities. Time for reflection is important to apply the new knowledge and contribute to professionalizing the youth work sector.

Summary of Video Content

Engaging with Interactive Video Content

In order for youth work to be commonly known and referred to across the globe as a profession in its own right, the following needs to occur:

- The implementation of a code of ethics,
- Consistency in service delivery,
- Quality tertiary youth work qualifications,
- A strong and influential professional youth workers associations.

A Code of Ethical Practice is a document that outlines a set of agreed values and principles of practice. This Code becomes the foundation for youth workers to make ethical decisions while working with young people (National Youth Agency 2004). In addition to this, a code of ethics also provides the wider youth sector with a frame of reference to ensure quality service delivery and to implement safe practice for both young people and workers (Corney 2018). Youth Workers, both paid and volunteers are covered by the Code of Ethics (National Youth Agency 2004).

There are peak bodies that are supporting the youth work sector. The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) was established in the 1970s with a prime purpose of

training and developing youth workers in all of the member countries of the Commonwealth, in addition to promoting the active participation of young people in their country's development (Commonwealth 2013). The National Youth Agency works with the youth work sector in the UK to support and improve services for young people.



Youth Affairs Council of Victoria: Code of Ethical Practice (An Australian Case study).

In the introduction video to this session, Dr. Tim Corney was interviewed as he had played an instrumental role in the development of the Code of Ethical practice for Victorian Youth workers. Here is an excerpt from that interview:

“We’d been talking about codes of ethics for some time and professionalization in particular, the Western Australians had produced a Code of Ethics and that had



led to some debate here in Victoria about whether we would use that Code or develop our own.

Bernie Geary who was the recently appointed Child Safety Commissioner had made a public statement, calling for a Code of Ethics, saying that Youth Workers needed to have a Code of Ethics and practice to guide their practice, particularly to keep young people safe.

And so the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria established the working committee, to look into a Code. It was a really interesting process because we really wanted to be consistent with the human rights frameworks that were being developed by the State Government at the time."

Reflect:

What would the benefits of co-designing a Code of ethics with young people and youth workers?

Dr. Corney continues:

"In 2005, the State Government had introduced a human rights charter for all Victorians and so we felt that our Code needed to be based in human rights and

needed to reflect those human rights aspirations and then the legislation that followed in Victoria and so that's what we did, we wrote our Code based in human rights. So that's what makes it fundamentally different from other Codes, and in particular the Western Australian code." (Corney 2019)

For further information on the formation of the YACVic Code of Ethical Practice, Corney's book '*Professional Youth Work: An Australian Perspective*' provides an interesting overview.



Reflect:

What is the history behind the development of your own Code of Ethical practice?

Youth Work as a Professional Practice.

1. Acting in the client's (young person's) interests
2. Code of practice
3. High entry standards (to qualifications)
4. Ongoing competence
5. Regulation by an independent body
6. Member accountability
7. Enforcement and discipline

Taken from: *Youth Work in the Commonwealth* p.16



Call to Action

What will you do now as a result of what you have learnt?

The following pages provide more information about establishing a Code of Ethics as well as resources to assist you in your work with young people. There are several ways that you can contribute to the continuing professionalisation of the youth work sector.



Do you have youth work qualifications?

Have a look at the accredited training opportunities in your state to further develop your youth work skills and knowledge. If you are already qualified, are you an active member of the youth worker's association in your area? If there is not a professional body set up, consider the role that you could play in bringing youth workers together to share their knowledge and work together.

“Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others” (Commonwealth of Nations 2007, p.15).

Links to other Information and Reading

Here is a list of additional information which will assist you to explore human rights further as well as resources that you can use while working with young people.

Resources

Journal Articles:

1. **Evans, G 2015**,
'Ethical codes in youth work: a comparative analysis', *Ethics and Social Welfare*, vol. 9, no.4, pp.420-426.
2. **Broadbent, R and Corney, T 2008**,
'Professional Youth Work in Victoria: the whole 'kitbag', *Commonwealth Youth and Development*, vol. 6, no.1, pp.15-22.
3. **Banks, S and Imam, U 2012**,
'Principles, Rules and Qualities: An ethical Framework for Youth Work', *International Journal for Adolescence and Youth*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp.65-82.
4. **Slovenko, K and Thompson, N 2016**,
'Social Pedagogy, Informal Education and ethical youth work practice', *Ethics and Social Welfare*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 19-34.
5. **Emslie, M 2012**,
'It's time: A case for the professionalization of youth work', *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 31, no.1, pp.16-24.

Online resources:

1. **New Zealand Code of Ethics.**
<http://www.arataiohi.org.nz/images/uploads/general/CoE2.pdf>
2. **Standards Council Scotland Code of Ethics**
<http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/resource/s/code-of-ethics/youth-work-commentary-on-code-of-ethics/>
3. **Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Australia Code of Ethical Practice**
<https://www.yacvic.org.au/resources/code-of-ethical-practice/>
4. **Malta Youth Work Code of Ethics**
http://cdn02.abakushost.com/agenzijazgha/zagh/downloads/Code_of_Ethics.pdf
5. **Estonia Youth Work Code of Ethics**
<http://kutsekoda.ee/et/kutseregister/kutsestandardid/10452095/lisad/10452096>
6. **National Youth Agency UK, Ethical Conduct in Youth Work – A statement of values and principles**
<http://www.nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Ethical_conduct_in_Youth-Work.pdf>



Other resources:

1. **Corney, T 2018**, *Professionalising Youth Work in the Commonwealth- Guidelines for Establishing a Code of Ethical Practice*, Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Work Associations
<https://www.caywa.global/single-post/2019/05/24/UPDATED---Guide-to-Establishing-a-Code-of-Ethical-Practice-for-YouthWork>
2. **Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Work Associations 2019**, *About*, CAWYA
<https://www.caywa.global/>
3. **Youth Work Essentials 2019**, *Code of Practice*, Youth Scotland
<http://www.youthworkessentials.org/volunteer-induction/child-protection/code-of-practice.aspx>
4. **Petkovic, S and Barta, O** n.d, *Youth Workers Education Path: working paper*, European Commision Youth Partnership, https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/11516594/06_SCRIB.pdf

Conclusion

A Code of Ethics is one important step in professionalising the youth work sector. The document must be co-designed using a collaborative approach with young people, youth workers and policy makers within the community to ensure that the document remains a living and operational document.

If your country does not currently have a Youth Work code of ethics, now is the time to start the campaign! It is our hope that this module has provided you with the resources to equip you to do great work with young people.



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Unit 3

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<https://www.youthworkandyou.org/ywelp-three/>

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For more resources like this, go to www.youthworkandyou.org

