# Navigating the "Great Retreat": How Do Ethics and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Inform Child and Youth Care Work?

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## Abstract

This conceptual paper argues for the essential integration of ethics and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) as the cornerstone of effective child and youth care (CYC) work, particularly in response to complex societal challenges. Using the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP) standards as a foundational compass, this paper presents a framework that connects individual professional conduct with broader systemic responsibilities. It posits that core ethical principles—such as respect for dignity, beneficence, and justice—are fully realized only when applied through a DEI lens that actively confronts systemic inequities affecting young people..

Ethics and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are deeply intertwined in child and youth care work. Within social settings, ethics and DEI focus on the well-being, dignity, and empowerment of young people (Friedman & Vlady, 2024). In recent years, and in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the social justice protests that followed in the United States, there has been increased attention on the need to build young people's capacity and efficacy to face the challenges presented today. Wicked problems (Childs & Lofton, 2021) such as poverty, global climate change, and food insecurity are just a few of the unique conditions that young people must navigate in society. The increased complexity associated with maturing or becoming an adult (Arnett, 2014) also manifests in the global economy, where young people are asked to either prepare or occupy job-related positions intended for adults. Increases in mental health disorders, social anxieties, and diminishing social services have created an environment where young people are more likely to feel more diminished and undervalued (Adams et al., 2022).

At their core, ethical principles such as respect, justice, and beneficence align with DEI goals by emphasizing the importance of creating environments where all children and youth feel valued, safe, and supported regardless of their identity, background, or experiences. Working with children and youth demands a nuanced understanding of the diverse ethical frameworks that shape the dynamics of care, guidance, and empowerment. Youth workers operate at the intersection of moral, cultural, and professional responsibilities, navigating complex relationships while fostering positive environments that prioritize trust, autonomy, and dignity. These ethical imperatives are neither universal nor static; they are deeply influenced by the socio-cultural contexts in which young people live and by the evolving nature of their developmental needs. To cultivate meaningful and equitable relationships, youth workers must critically engage with ethical principles such as respect, justice, and beneficence, while remaining attuned to the diverse values and lived experiences of the youth they serve. This task involves balancing the tensions between protecting young people's welfare and honoring their autonomy, ensuring that their voices are heard and their agency respected. By embracing ethical pluralism and practicing reflective decision-making, youth workers can create spaces where young people feel empowered, valued, and supported in their growth and aspirations. This conceptual paper provides a framework for understanding the role of ethics and DEI in youth care work, and how policy and advocacy can help to support youth care workers support of young people in different social settings.

The Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP) standards serve as a foundational compass for professionals dedicated to the well-being of young people.

These standards, far from being static guidelines, represent a dynamic and evolving framework that reflects the complexities of contemporary youth work. Increasingly, the integration of ethical considerations and principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is recognized as paramount to effective and responsible practice. This paper examines the ACYCP standards through the lens of ethics and DEI, arguing that a critical understanding of these domains is essential for practitioners seeking to create transformative and equitable experiences for young people. The ACYCP standards are rooted in a fundamental commitment to ethical practice. They provide a comprehensive framework that addresses various aspects of professional conduct, including relationships with young people, families, colleagues, and the broader community. The standards emphasize the importance of integrity, respect, responsibility, and accountability.

### ACYP and Ethics

The ACYCP standards are rooted in a fundamental commitment to ethical practice.

They provide a comprehensive framework that addresses various aspects of professional conduct, including relationships with young people, families, colleagues, and the broader community (Banks & Gallagher, 2008). The standards emphasize the importance of integrity, respect, responsibility, and accountability. For core principals guide the ethical application of the standards in practice. First, respect for the dignity and worth of individuals underscores the inherent value of every young person, regardless of their background, circumstances, or behaviors. It requires practitioners to approach young people with empathy, compassion, and a genuine commitment to their well-being. Second, maintaining clear professional boundaries and respecting confidentiality are crucial for building trust and ensuring the safety of young people.

Practitioners must be mindful of the power dynamics inherent in their relationships and avoid any actions that could compromise the well-being of the young people they serve. This includes safeguarding private information and ensuring that young people understand the limits of confidentiality. The ACYCP standards emphasize the importance of ongoing professional development and maintaining competence in relevant areas of practice. This includes staying abreast of current research, best practices, and ethical guidelines. Practitioners are expected to engage in self-reflection and seek supervision to ensure that they are providing the highest quality of care. Finally, child and youth care practitioners have a responsibility to advocate for the rights and well-being of young people, particularly those who are marginalized or underserved. This includes challenging systemic inequities and promoting social justice. This responsibility compels professionals to look beyond individual cases and address the root causes of problems faced by youth.

### The Road and Role of Ethics in Youth Care Work

Prior to the formalization of competency-based standards, the field of human services often lacked a unified approach to training and practice. This resulted in inconsistencies in service quality, varying levels of practitioner preparedness, and a lack of clear benchmarks for professional development. While ethical guidelines existed, their interpretation and application were often subjective and varied across different settings. This ambiguity posed challenges for both practitioners and the individuals they served, particularly vulnerable populations such as children in early education, residents in care facilities, and individuals involved in the juvenile justice and mental health systems (Vachon, 2020). The absence of standardized competencies also hindered the professionalization of the field. Without clear criteria for knowledge, skills, and attitudes, it was difficult to establish a consistent level of expertise and ensure accountability. This lack of standardization could lead to inadequate training, inconsistent service delivery, and potentially harmful practices.

Historically, youth work has been a voluntary commitment that has only emerged in recent decades as a paid practice (Rannala et al.,2024). Consistently, ethics has served as a cornerstone of professional youth work practice. The field of youth care encompasses a diverse array of responsibilities, from providing direct support to children and adolescents in need to working with families, communities, and institutions to foster positive developmental outcomes. At its core, youth care work involves deeply relational and often emotionally charged engagements with young individuals navigating complex social, psychological, and economic landscapes. This context underscores the critical role of ethics in guiding practitioners to act responsibly, empathetically, and effectively in the best interests of those they serve. Ethical considerations in youth care are not mere abstractions but essential principles that shape decision-making, inform professional boundaries, and safeguard the dignity and rights of vulnerable populations.

Youth care workers navigate a complex ethical terrain, encountering a myriad of challenges that require careful consideration and a deep understanding of ethical principles. Several principles provide a framework for examining youth care work. First, respect for autonomy emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing the agency of young people (Schusler et al., 2017). This includes supporting their development as they move from dependent to independent decision makers (Tisdell, 2017). Youth care workers must navigate a delicate balance between offering guidance and respecting the choices of youth, fostering their ability to make informed decisions while safeguarding them from harm. Beneficence and non-maleficence obligate youth care workers to prioritize the well-being of the youth they support while actively avoiding actions that could cause harm (Shircliff et al., 2024). These are particularly important in situations involving trauma, neglect, or abuse, where the potential for re-traumatization or unintended consequences is significant. Justice, as an ethical imperative, demands fairness and equity in the distribution of resources, opportunities, and treatment. For youth care workers, this principle often translates into advocating for marginalized populations and addressing systemic inequalities that disproportionately impact certain groups. Confidentiality, a cornerstone of ethical practice, necessitates a delicate balance between protecting privacy and ensuring safety. While young people should feel safe to confide in youth care workers without fear of disclosure, there are instances where confidentiality may need to be breached to prevent harm to the young person or others. This might involve disclosing information about abuse, self-harm, or threats of violence, requiring youth care workers to carefully weigh the potential risks and benefits of maintaining confidentiality versus disclosing information.

### Relational Nature of Ethics in Youth Care

Ethical practice in youth care work is relational (Feder & Steckley, 2024), and embeds dynamics of trust, empathy, and respect between practitioners and the youth they support (Smithson & Jones, 2021). Building and maintaining trust is a fundamental aspect of this relationship, as it creates a safe space for youth to express their thoughts, emotions, and needs. Youth care workers navigate a complex interplay of power dynamics that are inherent in the relationship between youth care workers and young people. These power dynamics demand careful consideration and ethical management. Youth care workers hold a position of authority and influence, which can be misused or perceived as exploitative if not handled ethically (Shaw & Greenhow, 2020). This requires youth care workers to be mindful of the power differential, to avoid any actions that could be perceived as coercive or manipulative, and to empower young people to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Empathy is another critical component of ethical youth care practice. By seeking to understand the lived experiences of young people, practitioners can tailor their interventions to meet individual needs more effectively. Empathy also enables youth care workers to remain attuned to the often-unspoken signals of distress or discomfort, allowing for timely and appropriate responses. However, empathy must be balanced with professional boundaries to avoid over-identification or emotional entanglement, which can compromise objectivity and efficacy.

### Ethical Challenges in Youth Care Practice

The complex and unpredictable nature of human development and social systems creates ethical dilemmas within the field of youth care work. For example, conflicts of interest can arise when a youth care worker's personal interests or relationships interfere with their professional judgment and decision-making. This might involve situations where a youth care worker has a personal relationship with a young person in their care, or where their personal beliefs or values conflict with the needs of the young person. Ethical youth care workers must be vigilant in identifying and addressing conflicts of interest, ensuring that their decisions are impartial and in the best interests of the young person.

Cultural sensitivity is paramount in youth care work, as youth care workers serve diverse populations with varying cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values. This requires youth care workers to develop cultural humility, to actively seek to understand the cultural contexts of the young people they serve, and to avoid imposing their own cultural biases or assumptions. Culturally sensitive practice involves recognizing and respecting the diverse ways in which young people express their identities, communicate their needs, and cope with challenges. While maintaining confidentiality is a fundamental ethical obligation, there are circumstances where breaching confidentiality may be necessary to protect a young person from harm. For example, if a youth discloses suicidal ideation or instances of abuse, the practitioner is ethically and legally mandated to take appropriate action, even if it means violating the individual's privacy. Navigating these situations requires a nuanced understanding of ethical principles, legal requirements, and the relational dynamics involved.

### Ethical Frameworks and Decision-Making Models

To navigate the ethical complexities of youth care work, practitioners often rely on established ethical frameworks and decision-making models. These tools provide structured approaches to analyzing dilemmas and identifying courses of action that align with ethical principles. One widely used framework is the principle-based approach, which emphasizes the application of core ethical principles—such as autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice—to specific situations. This approach encourages practitioners to weigh competing considerations and prioritize actions that maximize benefits while minimizing harm.

Another valuable tool is the relational ethics model, which focuses on the contextual and interpersonal dimensions of ethical practice. This model highlights the importance of dialogue, mutual understanding, and shared decision-making in resolving ethical dilemmas. By prioritizing the relational aspects of care, this approach aligns closely with the values and goals of youth care work. Ethical decision-making in youth care also benefits from collaborative processes that involve multidisciplinary teams, supervisors, and, when appropriate, the young people and families directly affected. Collaboration fosters diverse perspectives, reduces the risk of individual bias, and promotes accountability. It also reflects the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in ensuring ethical practice.

### Role of DEI in Youth Care Work

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have become increasingly critical in contemporary discourse surrounding social justice and human rights. DEI can serve as an imperative ethical framework for youth care work, and by integrating DEI principles into practice, youth care workers can create learning environments that foster

well-being and development of all young people. In the context of youth care work, DEI requires a critical examination of power structures, biases, and systemic inequities that can impact the experiences and outcomes of young people. It necessitates a commitment to culturally responsive practices, anti-oppressive frameworks, and trauma-informed care that acknowledge and address the unique needs and challenges faced by diverse youth populations.

DEI aligns with the core principles of social justice, which advocate for fairness, equity, and the elimination of oppression and discrimination. Youth care workers have an ethical responsibility to challenge systemic inequities and advocate for policies and practices that promote the well-being of all young people, regardless of their background or identity. This necessitates actively addressing issues like disproportionate representation of certain groups in the child welfare system or advocating for equitable access to educational and mental health resources. DEI is grounded in the recognition of the inherent dignity and worth of all individuals. Youth care workers have a duty to uphold the human rights of young people, including their right to be free from discrimination, to access quality care and support, and to participate fully in society. This includes creating safe spaces where young people feel comfortable expressing their identities and advocating for their rights when they face discrimination or marginalization. Ethical youth care practice is guided by the principles of beneficence (acting in the best interests of the young person) and non-maleficence (avoiding harm). DEI is essential to achieving these principles, as failing to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion can perpetuate harm and disadvantage for marginalized youth. For instance, a lack of cultural understanding can lead to misinterpretations of behavior and inappropriate interventions. Ethical codes of conduct for youth care professionals often explicitly mention the importance of cultural competence and non-discriminatory practice. DEI is not just a moral imperative, but a professional obligation for youth care workers. This requires continuous self-reflection, ongoing learning about different cultures and identities, and actively seeking to dismantle biases within oneself and within systems.

In youth care practice, workers should develop cultural humility and strive to understand the unique cultural contexts of the young people they serve. This involves active listening, learning about different cultural norms and values, and adapting interventions to be culturally relevant. For example, understanding the role of family and community in a young person's culture can inform how services are delivered. Youth care workers must recognize and challenge the ways in which systems of oppression, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism, impact young people. This requires understanding how these systems operate, advocating for systemic change, and empowering young people to resist oppression. For example, supporting a young person who is experiencing discrimination based on their sexual orientation involves validating their experiences, providing resources, and helping them develop coping strategies.

Many young people in care have experienced trauma, often compounded by experiences of discrimination and marginalization. Trauma-informed care recognizes the impact of trauma on behavior and development, and emphasizes safety, trust, and empowerment. This includes creating a safe and supportive environment, providing choices and control, and avoiding re-traumatization. For example, understanding the impact of historical trauma on Indigenous youth can inform culturally sensitive and trauma-informed approaches to care. Youth care settings should be physically and emotionally inclusive, welcoming diversity and fostering a sense of belonging for all young people. This includes providing accessible facilities, using inclusive language, and celebrating diverse cultures and identities. For example, ensuring that materials and resources reflect the diversity of the young people served can contribute to a more inclusive environment.

### Role of Organizations in Youth Care Work

Within youth care work, organizations encompass a wide range of agencies, institutions, and programs, play a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of youth care, influencing the quality, accessibility, and impact of services provided to young people. Organizations serve as the primary providers of essential services in youth care, offering a diverse array of programs and interventions designed to meet the multifaceted needs of young people. These services encompass residential care facilities, foster care programs, mental health services, educational support, substance abuse treatment, and community-based initiatives. By providing a structured framework and access to specialized resources, organizations create opportunities for young people to thrive, overcome challenges, and reach their full potential. Residential care facilities, for instance, provide a safe and supportive living environment for young people who are unable to live with their families due to various circumstances, such as abuse, neglect, or behavioral challenges. These facilities offer a structured daily routine, therapeutic interventions, and opportunities for personal growth, helping young people develop essential life skills and navigate their

challenges. Foster care programs, on the other hand, provide temporary homes for children and adolescents who cannot remain with their families. Foster families offer nurturing care, stability, and guidance, helping young people heal from past traumas and develop healthy attachments. Organizations play a crucial role in recruiting, training, and supporting foster families, ensuring that they are equipped to meet the unique needs of the young people in their care.

Mental health services, another critical component of youth care, are often delivered through organizations that specialize in providing counseling, therapy, and psychiatric care to young people experiencing emotional and behavioral challenges. These organizations employ trained professionals who can assess, diagnose, and treat a wide range of mental health conditions, helping young people develop coping mechanisms, manage their emotions, and improve their overall well-being. Educational support programs, offered by various organizations, aim to address the academic needs of young people who may be struggling in school due to learning disabilities, behavioral issues, or other challenges. These programs provide individualized tutoring, academic coaching, and advocacy, helping young people improve their academic performance, build confidence, and achieve their educational goals. Substance abuse treatment programs, often provided by specialized organizations, offer comprehensive interventions for young people struggling with addiction. These programs provide detoxification services, individual and group therapy, and relapse prevention strategies, helping young people overcome their addiction, develop healthy coping mechanisms, and rebuild their lives. Community-based initiatives, often spearheaded by non-profit organizations, play a vital role in providing support and opportunities for young people in their local communities. These initiatives may include after-school programs, mentorship programs, youth leadership development programs, and recreational activities. By providing positive role models, fostering a sense of belonging, and promoting positive youth development, community-based organizations contribute to the overall well-being of young people. Beyond providing direct services, organizations play a crucial role in advocating for systemic change to address the root causes of challenges faced by young people. By engaging in policy advocacy, research, and community mobilization, organizations can influence legislation, raise awareness, and promote social justice.

Organizations advocating for juvenile justice reform, for instance, work tirelessly to challenge punitive approaches to youth crime and promote restorative justice practices that focus on rehabilitation and reintegration. They conduct research to highlight the detrimental effects of incarceration on young people, lobby for policy changes that prioritize diversion and community-based alternatives and provide legal representation and support to young people involved in the justice system.

Organizations focused on child welfare reform advocate for policies and practices that prioritize the best interests of children and families, promoting prevention and early intervention services to reduce the number of children entering the foster care system. They work to improve the quality of foster care, support reunification efforts, and advocate for permanency planning that ensures children have stable and loving homes. Organizations dedicated to addressing youth homelessness work to raise awareness about the complex factors contributing to this issue, advocate for increased funding for affordable housing and supportive services, and provide direct assistance to young people experiencing homelessness, such as shelter, food, and case management. Organizations focused on educational equity work to address disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes, advocating for policies that promote equitable funding, culturally responsive teaching practices, and access to quality education for all young people, regardless of their background or zip code. Organizations play a critical role in cultivating the professional development of youth care workers, providing training, supervision, and opportunities for continuing education. By investing in the growth and expertise of their staff, organizations enhance the quality of care provided to young people and promote ethical and effective practice. Training programs for youth care workers cover a wide range of topics, including child development, trauma-informed care, cultural competency, ethical decision-making, and effective communication strategies. These programs equip youth care workers with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide high-quality care and navigate the complex challenges of the field. Supervision provides youth care workers with ongoing support, guidance, and feedback from experienced professionals. Supervisors help youth care workers reflect on their practice, identify areas for growth, and develop strategies to address challenges. Supervision also serves as a mechanism for ensuring ethical practice and adherence to professional standards.

Organizations also support the professional development of youth care workers by providing opportunities for continuing education, such as conferences, workshops, and online courses. These opportunities allow youth care workers to stay abreast of current research, best practices, and emerging trends in the field, enhancing their

knowledge and skills to better serve young people. Youth care work is not carried out in isolation but within a complex ecosystem of interconnected systems, including families, schools, communities, and government agencies. Organizations play a vital role in fostering collaboration and coordination among these various stakeholders, ensuring that young people receive comprehensive and integrated support. Interagency collaboration involves establishing partnerships and communication channels between different organizations involved in youth care, such as child welfare agencies, mental health providers, schools, and juvenile justice agencies. This collaboration ensures that young people receive coordinated services, avoids duplication of efforts, and promotes a holistic approach to care. Family engagement is another critical aspect of collaboration in youth care. Organizations recognize the importance of involving families in the care and decision-making processes, recognizing that families are the experts on their children and that their involvement is essential for successful outcomes. Organizations strive to build strong relationships with families, provide them with support and resources, and empower them to actively participate in their children's care. Community partnerships are also essential for effective youth care work. Organizations collaborate with community-based organizations, schools, faith-based institutions, and other stakeholders to provide comprehensive support to young people and their families. These partnerships create a network of support, expand access to resources, and foster a sense of community ownership in the well-being of young people.

### Challenges and Future Directions

Organizations in youth care work face numerous challenges, including limited funding, high staff turnover, complex regulations, and the ever-evolving needs of young people. Addressing these challenges requires innovative approaches, collaborative partnerships, and a commitment to continuous improvement. One significant challenge is the need for increased funding to support the expansion and enhancement of youth care services. Advocacy efforts are needed to secure adequate resources to meet the growing demand for services, invest in prevention and early intervention programs, and ensure that youth care workers are adequately compensated for their vital work. Another challenge is the high rate of staff turnover in youth care organizations, which can disrupt the continuity of care and negatively impact the well-being of young people. Organizations need to invest in strategies to improve staff retention, such as providing competitive salaries and benefits, offering opportunities for professional development, and creating a supportive and appreciative work environment. Navigating complex regulations and bureaucratic processes can also be a challenge for youth care organizations. Streamlining regulations, improving communication between agencies, and providing training and support to staff can help organizations navigate these complexities more effectively. The evolving needs of young people, particularly in the context of rapid technological advancements and changing social norms, present another challenge for youth care organizations. Organizations need to stay abreast of these changes, adapt their services to meet the emerging needs of young people, and embrace innovation to ensure that their interventions remain relevant and effective.

### The Role of Policy and Advocacy in Youth Care Work

The role of policy and advocacy in advancing ethics in youth care work is a critical area of focus that highlights the intersection of professional practice, systemic reform, and the promotion of social justice. Ethical considerations in youth care work are deeply rooted in principles of respect, dignity, and equity, guiding practitioners in their interactions with young people, families, and communities. However, ethical practice does not exist in a vacuum; it is shaped and constrained by the broader social, political, and institutional contexts in which youth care work takes place. Policy and advocacy play an instrumental role in shaping these contexts, providing the structural and systemic support needed to uphold ethical standards and address the complex challenges faced by youth care professionals. Policies serve as the foundation for ethical practice in youth care work by establishing the legal and regulatory frameworks that govern the field. These frameworks delineate the rights and responsibilities of practitioners, outline standards for service delivery, and provide mechanisms for accountability. At their core, policies are intended to safeguard the well-being and rights of young people, ensuring that they receive care that is not only effective but also ethical. However, the extent to which policies achieve this aim depends on their alignment with ethical principles and their responsiveness to the lived realities of young people and their families.

The ethical dimensions of policy extend beyond the content of the policies themselves to include the processes through which they are developed and implemented. Inclusive and participatory policymaking processes that engage young people, families, and communities in meaningful ways are essential for ensuring that policies reflect diverse perspectives and address systemic inequities. Moreover, policies that are co-created with those directly impacted by them are more likely to be perceived as legitimate and to promote ethical practice in youth care work. Advocacy is a central component of ethical practice in youth care work, reflecting a commitment to advancing

the rights and well-being of young people. Advocacy involves challenging systemic inequities, amplifying the voices of marginalized groups, and promoting policies and practices that uphold ethical principles. For youth care professionals, advocacy is both a moral obligation and a practical strategy for addressing the structural barriers that hinder ethical practice. One of the key areas where advocacy intersects with ethics is in addressing systemic injustices that disproportionately impact certain groups of young people. For example, youth from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, LGBTQ+ youth, and young people with disabilities often face heightened risks of discrimination, exclusion, and inequitable treatment within social service systems. Advocacy efforts aimed at dismantling these systemic inequities are essential for creating conditions that enable ethical practice and promote equity in youth care work.

Advocacy also involves pushing for policies that support the professional development and well-being of youth care workers themselves. Ethical practice requires not only individual commitment but also organizational and systemic support. Policies that provide adequate training, resources, and supervision for youth care professionals are critical for fostering ethical decision-making and preventing burnout. Advocacy efforts that highlight the importance of these supports can help to ensure that practitioners are equipped to navigate the complex ethical challenges they encounter in their work.

Advancing DEI in youth care work requires not only individual and organizational efforts but also systemic change at the policy level. Youth care workers are uniquely positioned to advocate for policies that address structural inequities and promote social justice. This advocacy can take many forms, from participating in legislative campaigns to collaborating with community organizations to amplify the voices of marginalized youth.

One area of policy advocacy is the reform of systems that disproportionately harm certain groups, such as the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. For example, youth care workers can advocate for restorative justice practices as an alternative to punitive measures that disproportionately impact youth of color. They can also push for policies that prioritize family preservation and support over removal and foster care placement, particularly for communities that have been historically targeted by child welfare interventions. Education policy is another critical area for advancing DEI in youth care. Access to quality education is a fundamental determinant of life outcomes, yet systemic inequities persist in the allocation of educational resources. Youth care workers should advocate for funding equity, culturally responsive curricula, and the inclusion of social-emotional learning programs that address the needs of diverse populations. By addressing these systemic issues, practitioners can help create a more equitable foundation for all young people.

While the ACYCP standards provide a strong foundation for ethical and DEI-informed practice, there are challenges to their implementation. Practitioners may face ethical dilemmas that require careful consideration and consultation. They may also encounter resistance to DEI initiatives from colleagues or organizations.

However, these challenges also present opportunities for growth and innovation. By engaging in ongoing dialogue and reflection, practitioners can develop their ethical decision-making skills and enhance their cultural competence. By advocating for policies and practices that promote equity and inclusion, they can create more just and equitable systems for young people. The ACYCP standards serve as a vital resource for child and youth care practitioners. However, they are not a substitute for critical reflection and ongoing learning. Practitioners must be willing to challenge their own assumptions and biases and to engage in continuous self-reflection. They must also be willing to advocate for systemic change and to work collaboratively with others to create more just and equitable systems for young people.

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