PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND VALUES IN HUMAN SERVICES

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INTRODUCTION

- What is Values?
- What is Morals?
- What is Ethics?
REFLECTION...

How important are ethics in today's society?

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**INTRODUCTION**

- All professional organizations, representing licensed and unlicensed staff, have established ethics codes.

- They are public statements that set clear expectations. They guide practice and uphold the key values of that profession or discipline.  
  (Mohr & Nunno, 2007)

- They are *broad and general*... not “cookbooks” for responsible behavior.  
  (Corey, Corey, & Callahan, 2003)
ETHICS

- A set of moral principles or values; principles of conduct governing an individual or a group (as in ‘professional ethics’), and a guiding philosophy. (Merriam–Webster, 1993)

- Ethical principles form moral choices as persons act as moral agents.

- Ethical standards are based on a foundational value system designed to tell us the difference between good and bad behavior.
  - Another more basic way of putting it is that ethical standards and principles tell us what we ought to do in any given situation.

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Professional ethics are at the core of social work. The profession has an obligation to articulate its basic values, ethical principles, and ethical standards.

Codes are meant to assist the staff person in making decisions, in other words to guide “professional judgments” regarding their practice.
Ethical Standards of Human Service Professionals includes all staff who work in human service settings, including those who are unlicensed.

Unlicensed/non-certified staff generally include Bachelor level prepared staff who work in social work or rehab positions, case managers, and mental health technicians.

However, all staff practices are important.
Ethical codes are not legal documents but they are a component of the expected standard of care.

They are often used to assisting legal decisions related to human service worker behavior.

They help guide treatment decision making and protect against future harm or difficulty.
PURPOSE OF ETHICS CODES

- To safeguard the welfare of clients by providing what is in their best interests.
  
  1. To educate professionals about sound ethical conduct.
  
  2. To provide a way to assure professional accountability.
  
  3. To serve, to improve practices.

  (Corey, Corey, & Callahan, 2003)

- Meant to protect vulnerable individuals from incompetent or dangerous people who are in powerful positions and who can *cause harm*.

  (Mohr & Nunno, 2007)
GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN ETHICS

- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Professional Confidence
- Confidentiality
- Professional Behavior
- Technical Standards

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HUMAN SERVICES PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

- Responsibilities to clients.
- Responsibilities to society.
- Responsibilities to colleagues.
- Responsibilities to the Profession.
- Responsibilities to employer and self.

(Codes of Ethics, 2004)
1. **CORE VALUE:** Service  
**ETHICAL PRINCIPLE:** to help people in need and to address social problems.

2. **CORE VALUE:** Social Injustice  
**ETHICAL PRINCIPLE:** challenge social injustice.

3. **CORE VALUE:** Dignity and worth of all person.  
**ETHICAL PRINCIPLE:** respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.

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4. **CORE VALUE:** Importance of human relationship.  
   **ETHICAL PRINCIPLE:** recognize the central importance of human relationship.

5. **CORE VALUE:** Integrity  
   **ETHICAL PRINCIPLE:** behaves in trustworthy manner.

6. **CORE VALUE:** Competence  
   **ETHICAL PRINCIPLE:** practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise.

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ETHICAL DILEMMA

- Absolutism vs. Relativism
- Consider context when evaluating “rightness” and “wrongness” of behavior:
  - Culture
  - Generation (i.e., age)
  - Personal value system
- Consider effect of emotional desires on ethical and moral behavior.
  - What happens when there is a tug-of-war between ethical standards and emotional desires or feelings?
- Competing values.
  - What do we do when our values collide?
ETHICAL DILEMMAS - WHAT YOU DO IN THOSE STICKY SITUATIONS?

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ETHICAL DILEMMAS – WHICH ONE?

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HOW DO YOU DECIDE?
WHOSE JUDGMENT IS RIGHT?

WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE?
There are two major approaches that philosophers use in handling ethical dilemmas:

- One is to focus on the practical consequences of what we do.
- The other focuses on the actions themselves and weighs the rightness of the action alone.
- The first school of thought argues that if there is no harm, there is no foul.
- The second claims that some actions are simply wrong in and of themselves.
How to Resolve?

- Kitchener’s Model (1994): four assumptions that need to be at the heart of any ethical evaluation.

- Beneficence
- Autonomy
- Justice
- Non-malfeasance

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STEPS IN SOLVING ETHICAL DILEMMAS

- Recognize the Ethical Issue
- Get the Facts
  - Relevant Facts
  - Individuals and groups with an important stake in decision
  - What are the options for acting?
- Evaluate Alternative Actions
- Make a Decision and Test It
- Act and Reflect the Outcomes

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Model of ethical decision making that stresses the importance of being culturally sensitive. (Garcia Cartwright, Winston and Borzuchowska, 2003).

- Challenged the notion that all cultures value autonomy equally as many cultures operate on a very interdependent basis.
- Cautioned that what one culture considers abnormal, another culture considers perfectly normal.
ETHICAL STANDARDS IN HUMAN SERVICES AND OTHER RELATED FIELD

- National Organization for Human Services: Ethical Standards
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW): Code of Ethics
- American Counseling Association (ACA): Code of Ethic
Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) Say’s:
“You cannot treat people by means of your wealth; hence, you should treat them by means of your moral conduct.”
REFLECTION...

Always do right –
this will gratify some
and astonish the rest.
(Mark Twain, 1901)

When I do good, I feel good,
When I do bad I feel bad,
That’s my religion. (Abraham Lincoln)

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