

ETHICS

Trainer Guide

Continuing Education

ETHICS

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ETHICS

SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

TIME: 30 Minutes (9:00 – 9:30)

DCFS Individual Training Needs Assessment Competency Addressed

- ❖ Currently, DCFS has not identified specific competencies which address professional ethics.

Objectives: Participants will

- Become familiar with the trainer and the training group members.
- Receive an overview of the training agenda and know which practice competencies will be addressed in this module.
- Understand the importance of exploring ethics within the professional setting.

Materials

- Participant manuals
- Whiteboard or flipchart stands and markers
- PowerPoint presentation – Examining Ethics
- LCD projector
- NASW Code of Ethics – print the most current version from <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp?print=1&>
- DCFS Code of Ethics

Trainer Note: The morning and afternoon breaks are not defined for the trainer. It is recommended that the trainer break at logical points in the material to meet the needs of the participants.

A. Housekeeping

Cover the following housekeeping information:

- Sign-in Sheets. Sign-in sheets must be completed. Direct participants to print names and information legibly to ensure proper information is available to enter into database.
- Smoking Areas. Training rooms are non-smoking environments. Direct smokers in the group to approved smoking locations.

- Training Center Facilities. Direct participants to the location of bathrooms, phones, message boards, and other important facility sites.
- Pagers/Cell Phones/Office Work. Turn pagers to vibrate. Turn cell phones to vibrate or off during training. Do not bring office work to training.
- Evaluations. We ask every participant to evaluate the training and the trainer at the conclusion of the training. The evaluation form has sections for comments about this training and suggestions for future trainings.

B. Introduction

Welcome the participants to the training. Introduce yourself and provide information about your education, experience, and background. Ask group members to introduce themselves and provide the following information: name, organization, professional affiliation, and reason for attending this training on ethics.

C. Review materials

Spend a few minutes checking to see that all participants have all of the materials you will be covering

D. Review agenda

Review the agenda for the training. Refer participants to **page 1 of the Participant Manual.** There is a PowerPoint presentation to accompany this training.

E. Large Group Listing – Why are you here today?

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to have group members identify reasons it is important to attend training in ethics and issues they would like addressed during the training.

Methodology

Write the following questions on a whiteboard or flip chart.

Why study ethics? Are there specific questions you want to address today?

Record the group's answers on flip chart paper or directly on the white board.

Processing

Do not attempt to answer or address specific questions or issues identified. If there are some questions/issues that are clearly beyond the scope of this training, note this and offer to speak

to the participant individually to assist him or her in finding an appropriate forum to explore the question.

Hopefully, we will address the questions that the group identifies through the discussion of the steps in solving ethical dilemmas and in the case scenario examples we will work.

Next, direct the group to **page 2 of the Participant Manual** and ask that they note the following points in the spaces provided.

The study of ethics is important for several reasons.

- To improve our ability to make ethical decisions and, thus, improve the quality of services provided
- To protect ourselves and our agencies from liability, and
- To protect our clients.

F. Case Scenario Group Discussion

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to explore how an individual's values are realized in the work setting.

Methodology

Ask the group to read the scenario titled "Susan" on page **3 of the Participant Manual**. Allow several minutes for the participants to read and consider the scenario. Ask for volunteers to answer the question, "What should Susan do?"

Processing

Understanding professional ethics is not enough. Practitioners must also practice according to their commitment to the identified standards of the profession, i.e., acting with integrity. Conflicts of values are at the heart of ethical problems. Generally, the situation does not "feel" right and causes us to stop and think. The consideration of ethics is subjective in nature.

One of the difficulties in our attempts to solve ethical dilemmas is that we cannot foresee all of the risks or the full extent of the risks. In ethical decision-making, there is not always a right or wrong. Resolving ethical problems requires the professional to consider a menu of options and choose the most agreeable or least unfavorable among the choices.

SECTION II – DEFINING ETHICS

TIME: 45 Minutes (9:30 – 10:15)

Objectives: Participants will

- Establish a common vocabulary for training

Materials

- Participant manuals
- Whiteboard or flipchart stands and markers
- Video – Professional Choices: Ethics at Work

A. What are your personal values? – Individual Exercise

Purpose

The purposes of the exercise are to establish a common vocabulary for the training and to highlight the possible conflict between individual values and the value base of one's profession.

Methodology

Have the participants answer the questions on page 4 of their Participant Manual – Your Thoughts on Ethics. Responses will not be collected.

Processing

Go over the group members' responses to the questions. The trainer may choose to share his or her answers to model self-disclosure.

Jot down the participants' responses and begin to note common responses.

Summarize the exercise with the following points:

- We will define "values" as our ideals, those things/ideas/etc. that we hold dear.
- Although your values are unique, there are likely some values that most of us here share.
- Generally, a common thread appears within the values identified by a group of helping professionals. The values of individuals of a "like mind" are going to be drawn to particular areas of study.
- Many professions or disciplines attempt to define the values upon which the work of the profession is based as a way of organizing itself.

Ask the group, **what happens when our individual values don't "mesh" with the professional of values upon which our work is to be based?**

As child welfare professionals, you make decisions that affect the lives of individuals and of children and their families. It is critical that you understand on what foundation or basis you make these decisions. It is also important that you have some ideas about the standards or ethics of helping professionals with whom you work.

As mentioned earlier, one reason to study ethics is to improve the quality of the services we provide. Most often, service decisions result from "best practice standards." Frequently, those standards are "captured" within the policy of our organizations. Organizational policy is drawn either from law or is an attempt by the agency to provide standards for action where law does not exist.

As a professional, there are times when adherence to the organizational policy results in ethical dilemmas for the professional. Further, acting within the limits set by the law may not always result in exercising the most "ethical" decision. Thus, ethical behavior means much more than simply adherence to the law or to organizational policy.

B. Defining Ethics

Have the participants turn to **page 5 in their manuals**, "What Are Ethics." Cover the definitions of ethics. Ask participants if there are any other definitions of ethics of which they are aware.

C. What is a Code of Ethics?

A code of ethics can be thought of as "currency" for the profession, something that is in use, accepted and recognized by all as having value. It is a means of professional self-regulation. It is the **standard** to which professionals of a particular discipline should aspire or must adhere. Most codes of ethics begin by defining a set of **core values** to which the profession adheres.

Examples of core values for social work and child welfare are:

Social Work:

- Service
- Social justice

Child Welfare:

- Protection of children
- Preservation of families

Note that while our values tend to remain constant, our codes do not. The code must be considered a growing and changing document. As the practice environment changes, so do the standards governing it.

As noted earlier, it is not enough to know the values upon which your profession depends; one must act on those values as well.

Every professional should be familiar with his or her own code of ethics. Note that for we have provided a copy of the NASW Code of Ethics for social workers and the Code of Ethics for Child Welfare Professionals developed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services as resource materials. The Division of Children and Family Services of Arkansas has not developed a similar code of ethics for its child welfare professionals at this time.



BREAK

SECTION III – REVIEW OF CODES OF ETHICS

Time: 60 minutes (10:30 – 11:30)

Objectives: Participants will

- Become familiar with the NASW Code of Ethics for Social Workers
- Become familiar with the Code of Ethics for Child Welfare Professionals

Materials:

- Participant manuals
- Whiteboard or flipchart stands and markers
- NASW Code of Ethics for Social Workers
- Code of Ethics for Child Welfare Professionals
- Video – Professional Choices: Ethics at Work

A. Reviewing the NASW Code of Ethics

Briefly highlight some of the following points in the NASW Code of Ethics:

- The six purposes of the NASW code of ethics on page 2.
- On page 2, the paragraph which begins with the sentence “Ethical decision making is a process.”
- The paragraph beginning with the sentence “A code of ethics cannot guarantee ethical behavior” on page 3.
- Each of the core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.
- The code identifies six global areas of responsibilities:
 - Ethical responsibilities to Clients
 - Responsibilities to Colleagues
 - Responsibilities in Practice settings
 - Responsibilities as Professionals
 - Responsibilities to the Social Work Profession
 - Responsibilities to the Broader Society

Allow the participants a few minutes to look over the code individually.

B. Small Group Exercise

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to review the NASW Code of Ethics in detail.

Methodology

Divide the larger group into six smaller groups. Assign each small group one of the values and ethical principles outlines on pages 3-4 of the NASW Code of Ethics in the resource material. Allow each group about 5 minutes to discuss the assigned value and ethical principle. Have each

group to elect a spokesperson to present a brief summary of the group's discussion around the assigned value/ethical principle.

Processing

As previously discussed, the values and principles upon which the field of social work depends tend to be constant. The code attempts to provide direction for the professional in conduct and decision making based on these identified values and principles. The professional must then ask the question, "Does this decision (or my action) correspond to the values and principles reflected in my profession's stated standards?"

C. Review of the Code of Ethics for Child Welfare Professionals

Next, ask participants to individually read the first three paragraphs of the Preamble of the Code of Ethics for Child Welfare Professionals.

Ask for thoughts from the group on the information contained in these paragraphs.

Touch on the following points if they are not raised during the discussion.

The goals of child welfare services are reflected in the mission statement of the Division of Children and Family Services:

- Protect children;
- Maintain families, when appropriate, with the child's health and safety always considered paramount;
- Provide quality services within available resources which enable families to maximize their potential and increase their abilities;
- Preserve and enhance human dignity and worth; and
- Prevent the need for services.

The caseworker has a duty and commitment to protect the needs of children and to support the family. This duty includes working to enhance the family's ability to function effectively to meet the needs of the child.

Working to enhance the family's functioning may include being available to help the family, believing that people can change, believing that people are worth the investment in time and effort, respecting and accepting the client as a person without accepting his/her behaviors, respecting the client's need to participate in the change process, and respecting the client's right to self-determination.

However, the worker's commitment to the child may require him or her to exercise legal authority to remove the child from the caregiver, bring the family into court to deal with issues of cooperation, or to recommend termination of parental rights. The authority inherent in the role of child welfare professional must not be overlooked or taken lightly. The dual nature of the child welfare worker's role may itself raise ethical questions.

Briefly highlight some of the following points in the Code of Ethics for Child Welfare Professionals:

- The code identifies general responsibilities around the principles of integrity, propriety, competence, avoiding harm, and documentation as well as several others.
- Within the section of responsibilities to clients, the code identifies responsibilities to the child, the parents, and other family members.
- The code identifies responsibilities to colleagues, the court, and foster parents.
- The code outlines principles and standards for supervising and administration of child welfare practice.
- The code also outlines responsibilities in research, the child welfare field and to society.
- The code makes a specific statement regarding ethical decision making.

D. Video – Professional Choices: Ethics at Work

Conclude the discussion of the definition of ethics and codes of ethics by showing the **video – Professional Choices: Ethics at Work (up to the section on the video where the discussion of confidentiality begins.)** Tell the group that the video is a production of NASW and engages in a discussion of social work values and ethical principles.

LUNCH

SECTION IV – GUIDELINES FOR RESOLVING ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Time: 45 minutes (1:00 – 1:45)

Objectives: Participants will

- Know the steps for ethical problem solving

Materials

- Participant manuals
- Whiteboard or flipchart stands and markers

A. Defining Ethical Dilemma

Begin this section by defining ethical dilemma.

An ethical dilemma occurs when a professional has to choose between apparently opposing duties and/or values. Provide the following example for the group's consideration.

An ethical dilemma may occur in your work with an adolescent mother. On the one hand, the adolescent has the right to self-determination. As a social worker or child welfare professional, you believe in and protect the right of the client to self-determination. However, the young mother behaves in a way that could place her child at risk of harm.

B. Steps for Ethical Problem Solving

Have participants turn to **page 6 of the Participant Manual – Steps for Ethical Problem Solving**. Go over each of the steps and explain the information presented.

Step 1:

Determine the ethical issue or dilemma.

Identify the ethical issues. Is there a conflict of values or rights or professional responsibilities? Other related issues may mask the essential ethical issue. Consider how someone else may define the problem.

Step 2:

Identify the key values or principles involved.

What exactly are the competing values?

Try to break the problem down into a manageable form by asking, "What are the separate and specific issues of the larger problem?" Who does the problem affect?

Step 3:

Rank the values or ethical principles which, in your professional judgment, are most relevant to the dilemma.

Are there reasons for choosing one value or principle over another?

Step 4:

Develop a plan of action based on your prioritized ethical considerations.

Have you the discussed the potential risks and consequences of various courses of action with clients and colleagues?

Can you support or justify your action plan with the values or principles on which the plan is based?

Would you want your choice published in a newspaper?

What would your colleagues think of the choice?

What would your profession at large think of the choice?

Step 5:

Implement your plan.

Using your skills and judgment, put your plan into practice.

The avoidance of any situation that could cause harm to the client or others should be the top priority.

Step 6:

Reflect on the outcome.

What were the consequences for those involved?

Explain that next they will be asked to apply these steps to various case scenarios presented.



BREAK

SECTION V – EXAMINING ETHICS

Time: 60 minutes (2:00 – 3:00)

Objectives: Participants will

- Have an opportunity to apply ethical problem solving steps to various case examples

Materials

- Participant manuals
- Whiteboard or flipchart stands and markers
- Overhead/overhead markers

A. Small Group Exercise - Case Scenarios

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to provide practice in applying the steps to ethical problem solving to case situations and to illustrate to participants the advantages of consulting with others around ethical issues with which they are faced.

Methodology

Have participants turn to **page 7** in their participant manuals – **Case Scenarios**. Ask the participants to work in small groups (the number in each group will depend on the size of the larger group.)

Ask the participants to

- read the scenario
- discuss the situation as a group
- use the information presented in steps 1-4 on page 6 of the participant manual to develop a recommendation for a plan of action

Each group will elect a spokesperson from one of the groups to present the key points from their discussion.

After working through the first scenario and discussion of the recommendations of each group, assign each of the group at least one other scenario, applying the steps for resolving ethical problems and making a recommendation on a course of action.

Each group will elect a spokesperson to present the discussion points.

Processing

Professionals must recognize the value of consulting with colleagues on ethical questions they encounter in practice. In the absence of a formalized “Ethics board” or “committee” within an

organization, professionals must rely on one another to assist in resolving ethical dilemmas with which you are faced. It is recommended that professionals use the steps provided (or some other system of examining ethical dilemmas) to assist in defining the ethical values at stake within a certain situation and the most desirable course of action to resolve the situation.

Please see the trainer guide in the Trainer's resource section for discussion points to use with the case scenarios.

B. Large Group Discussion

Purpose

To provide the participants an opportunity to discuss ethical dilemmas they may have concerns about at this time, to provide practice in applying the steps in ethical problem solving and to allow the participants an opportunity to make a plan for resolving future ethical dilemmas.

Methodology

Provide the group with clean sheets of paper. Ask the group to identify ethical dilemmas they may have encountered or may be facing at this time. The participants may choose to write the situation down on the paper and hand in anonymously or if someone feels comfortable, he or she may discuss the situation with the entire group.

If any situations are identified, assign various situations or dilemmas to the small groups. The small groups should apply the steps for ethical problem solving and come up with an action plan with recommendation.

Processing

As the small groups present recommendations for the various situations, be sure to identify the key values or principles which are relevant to the situation, prioritize the values according to professional judgment, and generate a list of alternatives with a plan for implementing one of those alternatives.

SECTION VI – CONCLUSION

Time: 15-30 minutes

A. Concluding Discussion

Spend a few minutes and ask the following question again,

“What barriers exist for me in my efforts to maintain ethical behavior or practice?”

Conclude the training with an invitation to the participants to be aware of the obstacles routinely encountered and encourage the trainees to formulate a plan for confronting the problem.

B. Evaluations

ETHICS

Participant Manual

Continuing Education

ETHICS

Agenda

I. Introduction

- A. Housekeeping
- B. Agenda
- C. Competencies
- D. Icebreaker - Why address ethics?

II. Defining Ethics

- A. Defining your own values
- B. Defining ethics

III. Identify Ethical Values and Standards Relevant to Child Welfare Services

- A. NASW Code of Ethics
- B. Code of Ethics for Child Welfare Professionals
- C. Video – “Professional Choices: Ethics at Work”

IV. Guidelines for Resolving Ethical Dilemmas

- A. Defining ethical dilemmas
- B. Steps for ethical problem solving

V. Exercising your Ethical Principles

- A. Small group exercise – Case scenarios
- B. Large group discussion

Conclusion/Evaluation

WHY STUDY ETHICS?



“SUSAN”

Susan has been working at the You Name It Agency for 3 months. She loves children and makes extra efforts to ensure her clients receive all the services to which they are entitled. Her workload is increasing rapidly as her supervisor recognizes that she is a hardworking, competent caseworker. Several of the “experienced” workers have the attitude that they will do just what is needed in order to get paid. Many of her coworkers do not seem to be concerned about their clients. Susan has found out that at least 2 of her coworkers are documenting visits which have not occurred. A couple of the workers are encouraging Susan to “slow down” and “not take it so seriously” so that she doesn’t burn out too soon. She is beginning to question herself and is becoming unhappy with her job. What should she do?

YOUR THOUGHTS ON ETHICS

1. What does the word “ethics” mean to you?

2. Where do ethics come from?

3. Do you have a plan or system in place for addressing ethical dilemmas?

4. Do you think it is acceptable to break a rule or regulation you find unfair, unwise, unnecessary or wrong?

5. What barriers exist for you in your efforts to maintain ethical behavior or practice?

WHAT ARE ETHICS?

Ethics are:

- The discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation*
- A set of moral principles or values. *
- The principles of conduct governing an individual or group.*

* Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition, 1996

A Code of Ethics is:

- A document that articulates the values of a profession and sets the guidelines and boundaries of conduct for all within the profession.±

±Ethical Child Welfare Practice: A companion handbook to the Code of Ethics for Child Welfare Professionals. Volume 1. 1999. Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

STEPS FOR ETHICAL PROBLEM SOLVING

Step 1: Determine the ethical issue or dilemma.

Identify the ethical considerations with which you are confronted.
Is there a conflict of values or rights or professional responsibilities?
Other related issues may mask the essential ethical issue. Consider how someone else may define the problem.

Step 2: Identify the key values or principles involved.

What exactly are the competing values?
Try to break the problem down into a manageable form by asking, "What are the separate and specific issues of the larger problem?" Who does the problem affect?

Step 3: Rank the values or ethical principles which, in your professional judgment, are most relevant to the dilemma.

Are there reasons for choosing one value or principle over another?

Step 4: Develop a plan of action based on your prioritized ethical considerations.

Have you discussed the potential risks and consequences of various courses of action with clients and colleagues?
Can you support or justify your action plan with the values or principles on which the plan is based?
Would you want your choice published in a newspaper?
What would your colleagues think of the choice?
What would your profession at large think of the choice?

Step 5: Implement your plan.

Using your skills and judgment, put your plan into practice.

Step 6: Reflect on the outcome.

What were the consequences for those involved?

Format developed by Sr. Vincentia Joseph and Sr. Ann Patrick Conrad
NASW Office of Ethics and Professional Review 750 1st Street, NE, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20002

CASE SCENARIOS

1. George supervises Patty. Patty is one of the best employees that George has. She is reliable, conscientious, and strives to do her best. She has been employed at the residential facility for 8 years. Because of her skill and reputation, Patty has been assigned to work with a new client who has numerous behavior problems and is known as being “difficult”. Last week, during staffing, Patty noted that she thought she was making progress with the client and that incidences of inappropriate behavior by the client were decreasing. Yesterday, after being cursed, spit on, and then slapped by the client, Patty berated the client. She immediately came to you to report this incident. She was very upset and asked to be allowed to go home. Nothing like this has ever happened with Patty. Your agency’s policy states that “Staff shall not emotionally, verbally, or physically harm clients. Violation of the policy is grounds for immediate termination. What do you do?
2. Michelle is a supervisor in the Lend a Hand Agency. She is responsible for completing annual employee evaluations of her supervisees. Michelle has been snowed under and the deadline for completing the evaluations is at the end of the week. Michelle sends the evaluations to each employee and asks each to complete the form and return to her and she will sign it. You are her employee, what do you do?
3. Wayne is a family service worker that you supervise. You do not personally like Wayne, but more importantly you have questioned his decision-making skills in the past. Wayne has applied for a job in another division and you would really like to see him get the job so that you know longer have to worry about his performance. The person who interviewed Wayne for the new job calls to get your assessment of Wayne's skills and abilities. What do you say?
4. Joan is a social worker in the neonatal intensive care unit. She has recently been assigned to work with a 17 year old mother who has a 20 week old baby on life support. The mother does not seem to have bonded with the child, has a limited support network, and no previous experience with younger siblings or other children. If the baby survives, there is little hope that he will develop normally and will need intensive medical treatment for the foreseeable future. The mother is adamant about keeping the baby alive on life support. You are unsure if this is in the best interests of the child. What should you do?
5. You are having dinner with a number of friends. One of your friends is talking about her new baby sitter. You have knowledge of the baby sitter. The baby sitter in question is a woman with an open protective service case in the county in which you work. The case was opened following an investigation of sexual abuse of her four year old daughter by her current husband. You want to warn your friend. May you?

6. You and Mark are both supervisors at the Helping Hands Agency. You are aware that Mark is a recovering alcoholic who has been sober for seven years. Two months ago Mark's wife filed for divorce. Mark recently told you that he is really under a great deal of stress and that he is having difficulty maintaining his sobriety. You encouraged Mark to call his sponsor and attend more AA meetings. This morning at staff meeting you noticed that Mark had a strong smell of alcohol on his breath. Shortly after staff meeting the director comes into your office and asks if you have noticed anything different about Mark in recent weeks, especially today. What do you say?
7. While dining at a local restaurant over the weekend you notice a colleague having dinner with a family member of a client of your agency. The situation bothers you, however, you are not sure if it is worth discussing with the colleague. What would you do?
8. Marie, a sixteen year old foster child on your caseload, has requested to review her case file. She wants to know what her previous workers have said about her. She is also interested in any information she can find on her father who divorced her mom when Marie was three. She is interested in contacting her father and wants his last known address. How do you proceed?
9. Kathy is the worker for Jean and her two children, ages 4 and 6. Jean has a history of drug abuse but completed drug rehabilitation and has regained custody of her children. Jean recently learned that she is HIV positive. She told Kathy that she does not want to tell Mike, her new boyfriend; because she is afraid he will not continue to see her. Mike has no children of his own, has a steady job and has been spending quality time with Jean and her children. Jean thinks that Mike may ask her to marry him. Jean becomes pregnant with Mike's baby. She has not talked to Mike about her HIV status and is avoiding prenatal care. What should Kathy do?
10. Brian has been handling a full caseload when he was assigned ten additional cases to cover for another worker who recently quit. One of the new cases is the Benton family. Brian has not had time to give the case his full attention. He reviewed the case plan but did not take time to review the most recent documentation of contacts between the previous worker and the family. Brian is not sure that the children needed to be removed from the home. He is asked to testify at the adjudication hearing. Based on what Brian knows, he recommends to the court that the children be returned home. He is unaware that the last two contact notes contain information that the worker is concerned about continued substance abuse by the mom. What are the ethical considerations in this situation?

Code of Ethics



for Child Welfare Professionals

DCFS is an equal opportunity employer,
and prohibits unlawful discrimination in all
of its programs and services.

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CODE OF ETHICS FOR CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONALS

Child welfare professionals are society's representative in its attempts to meet the needs of abused and neglected children and their families. The authority delegated to them to intervene in the lives of families is accompanied by the responsibility to act in a professional manner.

The Code of Ethics for Child Welfare Professionals is the public acknowledgment and acceptance of that responsibility. It sets forth the values and ethical principles which form the foundation of the child welfare field and is intended to guide practice decisions both within the Department of Children and Family Services and within the private agencies with which it contracts. It is also a statement of shared commitments held by professionals working to improve the child welfare field and our promise to our clients and to society that we are worthy of their trust.



Bryan Samuels, Director



Denise Kane, Inspector General

9. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE CHILD WELFARE FIELD

- a. Child welfare professionals should perform their duties in a competent, honest, diligent manner to ensure society's continuing trust in the child welfare field.
- b. Child welfare professionals should broaden the knowledge base of the child welfare field.
- c. Child welfare professionals should critically examine child welfare policies and advocate appropriate change.
- d. Child welfare professionals should take appropriate action against unethical conduct by any member of the child welfare field.

10. RESPONSIBILITIES TO SOCIETY

Child welfare professionals should apply the values and specialized knowledge of the child welfare field and should work to increase public awareness of those values in order to promote the general welfare of society.

11. ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

- a. Child welfare professionals have a duty to be familiar with this Code of Ethics and to consider which ethical principles apply in each practice decision.
- b. Child welfare professionals should follow applicable ethical principles in each practice decision. If there is a conflict between two or more ethical principles and/or responsibilities in a particular case, child welfare professionals should consult with superiors and colleagues knowledgeable about ethics issues, or with the child welfare ethics committee, in choosing a proper course of action.
- c. If the demands of an agency with which child welfare professionals are affiliated conflict with this Code of Ethics, child welfare professionals should clarify the nature of the conflict, make known their commitment to the Code, and seek to resolve the conflict in a way that permits fullest adherence to the Code.
- d. Child welfare professionals who observe a violation of this Code by a colleague should bring the issue to the attention of the colleague if an informal resolution appears appropriate. If the issue cannot be informally resolved, child welfare professionals should refer it to appropriate superiors and/or to the child welfare ethics committee.

- e. Child welfare administrators should promote organizational accountability through appropriate controls and procedures.
- f. Child welfare administrators should maintain a high level of competence and provide support to upgrade competence throughout the organization.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES IN RESEARCH

Research performed by child welfare professionals should be rigorous and relevant to the delivery of services, the outcomes of interventions, and policy formation in the child welfare field.

- a. Child welfare professionals should protect the rights and welfare of research subjects, treating them with respect and dignity and protecting them from harm, danger, unnecessary discomfort, and ethnic and/or social discrimination.
- b. Child welfare professionals should obtain informed consent from their prospective subjects, after explaining in language that is understandable to them, the nature of the research; its possible risks, benefits, and consequences; alternative treatments or interventions; confidentiality rights; and the voluntary nature of participation with no penalty for refusing to participate or choosing to withdraw at a later date. Child welfare professionals should answer any questions the prospective subject asks.
- c. When the prospective subject is not legally capable of giving informed consent, child welfare professionals should give an appropriate explanation of the research, obtain assent when appropriate, and obtain informed consent from a legally authorized representative.
- d. Child welfare professionals should conduct research according to accepted standards of professional competence, federal and state law and regulations, agency policy, and accreditation requirements.
- e. Child welfare professionals should obtain the approval of the agency Institutional Review Board and other relevant regulating boards before initiating research and should conduct their research according to approved protocol.
- f. Child welfare professionals should report the findings of their research truthfully and completely. They should work to prevent misuse and distortion of their research findings.

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7.01 Personal Integrity

- a. Child welfare administrators should treat each client, colleague, and employee with respect.
- b. Child welfare administrators should maintain truthfulness and honesty and not compromise them for advancement, recognition, or personal gain.
- c. Child welfare administrators should take responsibility for their own decisions and behavior.
- d. Child welfare administrators should conduct official acts without partisanship.

7.02 Public Welfare

- a. Child welfare administrators should exercise their discretionary authority to promote the values of the child welfare field.
- b. Child welfare administrators should respond to the public in ways that are complete, truthful, clear, and easy to understand.
- c. Child welfare administrators should understand and apply legislation and regulations relevant to their professional role.
- d. Child welfare administrators should work to improve and change laws and policies which are counter-productive or obsolete.
- e. Child welfare administrators should prevent all forms of mismanagement of public funds by establishing and maintaining strong fiscal and management controls, and by supporting audits and investigative activities.

7.03 Organization

- a. Child welfare administrators should enhance organizational capacity for open communication, creativity, efficiency, and dedication.
 - b. Child welfare administrators should subordinate institutional loyalties to the public good.
 - c. Child welfare administrators should establish procedures that promote ethical behavior and hold individuals and organizations accountable for their conduct.
 - d. Child welfare administrators should provide organization members with a working environment which permits frank discussion and criticism of agency operations and with an administrative means for dissent, assurance of due process, and safeguards against reprisal.
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6.02 Management Responsibilities

- a. Child welfare supervisors should apprise supervisees of current professional information and encourage supervisees to take advantage of continuing professional education in order to maintain a high level of competence.
- b. Child welfare supervisors should communicate, explain, and apply legislation, agency policies, and administrative decisions necessary for them and for their supervisees to perform their work competently.
- c. Child welfare supervisors should act as advocates for their supervisees by apprising upper management of problems which impede or prevent them from efficiently and effectively performing their duties. They should also suggest appropriate changes in policy and procedure.
- d. Child welfare supervisors should provide necessary training and guidance when supervisors' personal or cultural differences could result in biased or discriminatory professional intervention with a particular individual or groups.
- e. Child welfare supervisors should consult with supervisees and help with remedial action if they have knowledge of the supervisees' impairment due to personal problems, mental health problems, or substance abuse.
- f. Child welfare supervisors should evaluate supervisors fairly and objectively on clearly stated criteria, sharing opinions about the supervisees' performance in an ongoing manner.
- g. Child welfare supervisors should take appropriate steps to terminate employment of supervisees who are not competent and are not likely to become competent.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES IN ADMINISTRATION

Child welfare administrators recognize that, although each child welfare professional is responsible for his/her ethical behavior, the agency is responsible for the environment in which ethical judgments are made. Child welfare administrators, therefore, should nurture and model organizational norms that encourage and reward the ethical behavior for which society holds the child welfare field accountable.

Code of Ethics for Child Welfare Professionals

PREAMBLE

Society values each child's natural right to have basic needs for survival and development met and each child's natural right to live with his/her parents. Society also values each parent's natural right to rear his/her child, but through its child welfare laws, defines certain situations in which the parent's rights can be limited so that the child can be protected. Society delegates to the child welfare field and to those who become members of the field the authority to intervene in the lives of families with the goals of ensuring the safety of abused and neglected children, assisting parents in meeting minimum parenting standards, and planning alternative permanent care when parents are incapable of or unwilling to meet those standards.

The child welfare professional is a person who functions in a societally sanctioned decision making capacity for neglected and/or abused children and their families. When individuals accept the role of child welfare professional and the delegated authority inherent in that role, they publicly acknowledge having the professional responsibilities which accompany that authority. Society and agency clients, therefore, have legitimate expectations about the nature of professional intervention as it occurs in one-on-one professional/client interactions, in the management and administration of those providing intervention, and in policy decision-making.

Because of their special knowledge and authority, all professionals are in a position of power in inherently unequal relationships with their clients. The power of child welfare professionals is particularly daunting because of their delegated state authority and the mandated nature of their professional/client relationships. Their clients and society must be able to trust that child welfare professionals are working with their clients' interests in mind with no element of disrespect, punishment, or personal bias. Child welfare professionals must behave in such a manner as to ensure not only that their delegated authority is exercised appropriately but that their clients and society perceive their use of authority as appropriate.

Child welfare professionals' responsibilities to clients are grounded in a fiduciary relationship with its promise of trustworthy intervention in the lives of those less powerful. This type of relationship entails certain responsibilities based on the values of respect for persons, client self-determination, individualized intervention, competence, loyalty, diligence, honesty, promise-keeping, and confidentiality. Child welfare professionals' responsibilities to colleagues, supervisors, foster parents, the court, employees, the child welfare field, and society also find their roots in many of the same values - respect for persons, honesty, promise keeping, and loyalty - as well as in the values of accepting the responsibility for one's actions and their consequences and holding professional behavior to a standard higher than self-interest.

This code of ethics sets forth ethical principles which should be considered by child welfare professionals whenever ethical judgment must be exercised in specific situations and which should become habitual guides to daily conduct. It sets standards of behavior to be adhered to in relationships between professionals and their clients, colleagues, supervisors, foster parents, the court, employees, the child welfare field, and society. Its purpose is to assist in identifying the many and often competing values and responsibilities present in practice issues so that appropriate consideration is given to each value and responsibility in the decision-making process.

It is understood that ethical judgments are made by individuals who bring their personal values, culture, and experiences to the decision-making process. By making public the values and ethical standards shared by child welfare professionals, this code will assist in making ethical decisions more consistent and objective and will reinforce child welfare professionals' accountability to society and to those individuals with whom they have professional relationships.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES TO FOSTER PARENTS

Foster parents act as a bridge between the client and child welfare agencies. Therefore, child welfare professionals should treat foster parents with respect, fairness, honesty, and cooperation.

- a. Child welfare professionals should be familiar with and adhere to the Foster Parent Law which sets forth the rights and responsibilities of foster parents.
- b. Child welfare professionals should not engage in sexual activities with foster parents with whom they are presently working.
- c. Child welfare professionals should consult with their appropriate superiors when initiating a potentially intimate relationship with a foster parent or if they have had an intimate relationship with a person who will now be working with them as a foster parent. These types of situations should be resolved in a manner which avoids harming and/or exploiting all affected persons.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES IN SUPERVISION

Child welfare supervisors, as members of management, recognize that their primary responsibility is to implement the policies and practices of their agencies so that the best possible services are delivered to clients. Child welfare supervisors also recognize their responsibilities to their supervisors, treating them with respect, fairness, and honesty; offering the professional support necessary to sustain the supervisors' continued motivated work; and providing a work environment which encourages ethical behavior.

6.01 Personal Integrity

- a. Child welfare supervisors should not use their position of authority to exploit their supervisees in any way.
- b. Child welfare supervisors should not engage in sexual activities with current supervisees.
- c. Child welfare supervisors should accept responsibility for their own decisions and the consequences of those decisions. They also have a high level of responsibility for decisions made by their supervisees and should accept appropriate responsibility for those decisions.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES

Child welfare professionals should act with integrity in their relationships with their colleagues, treating them with respect, honesty, and fairness and accepting their right to hold values and beliefs that differ from their own.

- a. Child welfare professionals should cooperate with colleagues in order to serve the best interests of their clients effectively and efficiently.
- b. Child welfare professionals should accurately represent the views and qualifications of colleagues, making opinions on such matters known through the appropriate professional channels.
- c. Child welfare professionals should extend to colleagues of other agencies the same respect, honesty, fairness, and cooperation that is extended to colleagues in their own agencies.
- d. Child welfare professionals should extend to members of other professions the same respect, honesty, fairness, and cooperation that is extended to child welfare professionals.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE COURT

Child welfare professionals frequently are called upon to appear in court and participate in court proceedings. They have special responsibilities in that setting.

- a. Child welfare professionals should treat all parties to the case with respect, honesty, fairness, and cooperation.
- b. Child welfare professionals should thoroughly familiarize themselves with the background of the case involved.
- c. Child welfare professionals should testify honestly in court. They should apprise the court of all relevant facts in the case, both positive and negative, of which they are aware.
- d. Child welfare professionals should advise the court if they come to know of the falsehood of prior testimony given in a child welfare proceeding.
- e. Child welfare professionals should take appropriate action against any unethical conduct they observe in court.

1. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

1.01 Integrity

Child welfare professionals should carry out their professional responsibilities with integrity, treating those with whom they have professional relationships in a dignified, respectful, honest, and fair manner.

1.02 Propriety

Child welfare professionals should maintain high standards of personal moral conduct when engaged in professional activity. Personal standards and conduct are private matters except when such conduct may compromise professional responsibilities or reduce public confidence in the child welfare field.

1.03 Competence

- a. Child welfare professionals should provide services only within the boundaries of their competence based on their education, training, supervised experience, and professional experience.
- b. Child welfare professionals should accurately represent their qualifications, educational backgrounds, and professional credentials.
- c. Child welfare professionals should be aware of current professional information and take advantage of continuing professional education in order to maintain a high level of competence.

1.04 Avoiding Harm

Child welfare professionals should act in the best interest of those toward whom they have professional responsibilities. It is understood, however, that choices must often be made from among competing values and responsibilities resulting in some values being given priority over others.

- a. Child welfare professionals should promote the welfare of those toward whom they have professional responsibilities.
- b. Child welfare professionals should avoid harming those toward whom they have professional responsibilities.
- c. Child welfare professionals should minimize harm when it is unavoidable.

1.05 Nondiscrimination

- a. Child welfare professionals should not engage in and should act to prevent discriminatory behavior based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law.
- b. Where personal or cultural differences could significantly affect child welfare professionals' intervention with a particular individual or groups, child welfare professionals should seek and obtain the supervision and training necessary to ensure that the intervention is unbiased, competent, and culturally appropriate.

1.06 Sexual Harassment

Child welfare professionals should not engage in and should act to prevent sexual harassment.

1.07 Conflict of Interest

1.07(a) Multiple Relationships

Child welfare professionals should take into consideration the potential harm that intimate, social or other nonprofessional contacts and relationships with clients, family members, foster parents, colleagues and supervisors could have on their professional objective judgment and performance.

1. Child welfare professionals should avoid any conduct that would lead a reasonable person to conclude that the child welfare professional might be biased or motivated by personal interest in the performance of duties.
2. Whenever feasible, child welfare professionals should avoid professional relationships when a preexisting nonprofessional relationship is present.
3. Child welfare professionals should discuss past, existing and potential multiple relationships with their appropriate superiors and resolve them in a manner which avoids harming and/or exploiting affected persons.

intervention for a period of at least two years after the termination of the professional intervention. Because sexual intimacies with former clients are potentially harmful to the client, child welfare professionals who do engage in sexual intimacies after a two year period following termination of professional intervention are responsible for demonstrating that no exploitation is taking place.

- d. Child welfare professionals should not engage in sexual activities with former clients who were minors during the professional intervention for a period of at least two years after the client has reached the age of 21. Because sexual intimacies with former clients are potentially harmful to the client, child welfare professionals who do engage in sexual intimacies after this two year period following the client's reaching the age of 21 are responsible for demonstrating that no exploitation is taking place.
- e. Child welfare professionals who are still employed in the field should consult with their superior before initiating with a former client a relationship that has the potential for becoming intimate to help ensure that no exploitation will take place. Child welfare workers who leave the field continue to have the responsibility of considering the potential for exploitation and harm in relationships with former clients.
- f. Child welfare professionals should not engage in sexual activity with clients' relatives or with other individuals with whom clients maintain a close personal relationship since such behavior has the potential of being harmful to the client.

2.06 Termination of Services

Child welfare professionals should not abandon their clients. Child welfare professionals should continue appropriate intervention with clients until intervention is no longer required to meet the needs of the child or is no longer appropriate under the applicable statute. At that time, intervention is terminated.

- a. Child welfare professionals should promptly notify clients when termination or interruption of services is anticipated.
- b. Prior to termination, for whatever reason, except precise order of the court, child welfare professionals should provide appropriate pre-termination counseling and take other steps to facilitate transfer of responsibility to another colleague or provider of services if further intervention is required.
- c. Child welfare professionals should request the transfer of a case to another professional when compelling reasons prevent successful professional intervention.

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- a. Child welfare professionals should inform clients as soon as feasible and in language that is understandable about the nature of the professional relationship, the nature of the professional intervention, the professional's delegated authority and the limits of that authority, which decisions the client can make and which decisions the child welfare professional will make.
 - b. Child welfare professionals should inform clients of the role of the court, if any, and of their legal and procedural rights.
 - c. Child welfare professionals should keep clients informed about the case plan throughout the entire intervention.
 - d. Child welfare professionals should obtain permission for intervention from a legally authorized person when a client is legally incapable of giving informed consent.
 - e. Child welfare professionals should seek assent for intervention from clients who are not capable of giving an informed consent, giving due consideration to the clients' preferences in pursuing their best interests.

2.04 Confidentiality

- a. Child welfare professionals should respect the confidentiality rights of clients and those with whom they work or consult. Confidential information should be used only for professional purposes and shared only with authorized parties.
- b. Child welfare professionals have a duty to be familiar with all relevant confidentiality requirements and limitations found in federal and state laws and agency rules that apply to the child welfare field.
- c. Child welfare professionals should inform clients of all relevant confidentiality requirements and limitations.

2.05 Sexual Relations with Clients

Child welfare professionals are in inherently unequal relationships with their clients creating the potential for abuse of power. In mandated relationships there is a special potential for harm and exploitation of vulnerable clients by child welfare professionals.

- a. Child welfare professionals should not engage in sexual activities with current clients.
- b. Child welfare professionals should not accept as clients persons with whom they have previously engaged in sexual activities.
- c. Child welfare professionals should not engage in sexual activities with former clients who were adults during the professional

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4. Child welfare professionals who are also foster parents should disclose and have ongoing discussions regarding these dual roles with their appropriate superior in order to prevent conflicts of interest, abuse of power, or the suggestion of impropriety in carrying out professional activities.

1.07(b) Private Interests

1. Child welfare professionals should not allow their private interests, whether personal, financial, or of any other sort, to conflict or appear to conflict with their professional duties and responsibilities. Any conduct that would lead a reasonable person to conclude that the child welfare professional might be biased or motivated by personal gain or private interest in the performance of duties should be avoided.
2. Child welfare professionals should avoid professional matters where they have a private financial or personal interest. If a situation arises where such a conflict may exist, child welfare professionals should consult with an appropriate superior and take steps to eliminate any potential or real conflict.

1.08 Personal Problems

- a. Child welfare professionals should not perform professional activities when they know or should know that personal problems, mental health problems, or substance abuse could impede professional judgment and performance.
- b. When such problems could interfere with performance, child welfare professionals should consider obtaining appropriate professional help and determine, along with their appropriate superior, whether they should limit, suspend or terminate their professional duties.

1.09 Documentation of Professional Work

Child welfare professionals should accurately and truthfully document their professional work according to agency policy and/or legal requirements in order to ensure accountability and continuity in the provision of services to clients.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES TO CLIENTS

The client is a child or a family member who is receiving a professional intervention and/or child welfare services from DCFS or through an agency with which DCFS has purchase of service contracts. The first responsibility of the child welfare professional is to the client; however, the specific nature of that responsibility differs depending on whether the client is the child, the parent, or another family member.

A. Responsibilities to the child

The child becomes a client when the child's right to have basic needs met may have been compromised or denied. The child welfare professional acts to ensure that the basic needs of the child are met by the child's parents. If this is not possible, the child welfare professional acts in a timely manner to ensure that the basic needs of the child are met by others.

B. Responsibilities to the parents

The parent becomes a client when the parent's ability to responsibly care for the child has been questioned. Both the parent and the child have the right to live together as a family, and the parent has the right to care for the child if the parent is able and willing to meet the basic needs of the child. The child welfare professional makes reasonable efforts to help the parent meet the applicable standard of care, and recognizes the changing nature of the responsibilities of the professional to the parent based on the parent's response to intervention.

C. Responsibilities to other family members

Other family members become clients when providing services to them will help meet the basic needs of the child. The child welfare professional acts to provide those services.

2.01 Integrity

Child welfare professionals recognize the vulnerability of their clients and the serious responsibilities associated with intervention in the parent/child relationship. The behavior of child welfare professionals should reflect the emphasis placed by the child welfare field on professional trustworthiness and on the values of respect for persons,

client self-determination, individualized intervention, competence, loyalty, diligence, honesty, promise-keeping, and confidentiality.

2.02 Client Self-Determination

The mandated nature of the child welfare professional/client relationship limits the options available to clients, but does not eliminate their right to self-determination. Client self-determination refers to the client's right to make self-determined choices and to freely act upon those choices without undue influence or coercion. It also refers to the client's right to receive information necessary to make a self-determined choice.

- a. Child welfare professionals should evaluate the decision-making capacity of all clients and reevaluate it appropriately as circumstances change.
- b. Child welfare professionals should ensure that all clients, whatever their age, have the opportunity to make self-determined choices according to their level of understanding and decision-making capacity.
- c. Child welfare professionals should ensure that their clients have available to them all of the information necessary to make self-determined decisions.
- d. Child welfare professionals should ensure that their clients have the opportunity to make self-determined choices from among the options available to them free from external coercion.
- e. Child welfare professionals should ensure that psychological constraints to self-determined decision-making are addressed and, if possible, eliminated or reduced so that self-determination is enhanced.

2.03 Informed Consent

Informed consent emanates from the principle of client self-determination. It promotes decision-making by the client after complete and accurate information regarding the nature of the intervention and the possible consequences of that intervention have been fully discussed by the professional and the client. Child welfare professionals have the responsibility to engage in this process with mandated clients who have not chosen to become clients but who have options to consider and decisions to make within the framework of a mandated intervention.