



ETHICS

Participant Manual

Hotline Operator Training

Continuing Education

ETHICS

Agenda

I. Introduction

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

II. Defining Ethics

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

III. Guidelines for Resolving Ethical Dilemmas

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

IV. Exercising your Ethical Principles

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

V. Conclusion/Evaluation

WHY STUDY ETHICS?

What kinds of “ethical dilemmas” have you faced in your professional life (that you are willing to share?)

Have you been in a situation at work where you were “uncomfortable”?

Have you ever witnessed unfair or unethical behavior of a colleague toward the public you serve?



SUSAN

Susan has been working at the Hotline for 3 months. She loves the job and makes extra efforts to ensure that she is doing all she can to help her peers. Her supervisor recognizes that she is a hardworking, competent operator.

Several of the “experienced” workers on her shift do just what is needed in order to get paid; they don’t seem to be concerned about how their behavior impacts the other operators on duty or, more importantly, how their behavior may impact children in the state who are at risk for abuse and neglect.

Susan has found out that at least 2 of her coworkers are using the “not ready” feature on the phone system to avoid taking calls. One operator has encouraged 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 term “ethics” mean to you? Where do ethics come from?

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

3. What barriers exist for you in your efforts to maintain ethical behavior or practice? Do you have a plan or system in place for addressing ethical dilemmas?

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
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3 R'S IN ETHICAL GUIDELINES

The first "R" is RESPECT. Respect involves:



The second "R" is RESPONSIBILITY. Responsibility includes:



The third "R" is RESULTS.

- ❖ Do "The ends justify the means" ?

Consider **Respect, Responsibility and Results** before taking action and avoid the following common rationalizations for not doing what's right:

- ❖ Everyone else does it.
- ❖ They'll never miss it.
- ❖ Nobody will care.
- ❖ The boss does it.
- ❖ No one will know.
- ❖ I don't have time to do it right.
- ❖ That's close enough.
- ❖ It's not my job.

<http://ethics.georgesmay.com/>

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING MODEL

Adapted from: Congress, E.P. (1996). Social Work Values and Ethics, Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

E - Examine personal, professional, client, agency, societal values

Examine values

T - Think about the applicable ethical standards, laws and legal precedents that apply

Think about standards

H - Hypothesize different decisions, their outcomes and the impact on relevant systems

Hypothesize

I - Identify who will benefit and who will be harmed by these specific decisions keeping in mind the professional values and mission

Identify

C -Consult

Consult

CASE SCENARIOS

Keep in mind that ethical dilemma discussions are most often about making choices so that we “do no harm”. Some problems have a correct answer, because of standards and policy that outline what to do. But many of our toughest choices do not have a right or wrong answer. These are the choices that are often the hardest to answer.

1. Patty is one of the best employees at the Hotline. She is reliable, conscientious, and strives to do her best. She has been employed at the hotline for a number of years. Because of her skill, Patty has become known as the one who can handle “difficult people”.

Last week, Patty took a call where she was cursed and put down. She didn’t respond well and became rude and offensive with the caller. 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.

After this incident happened, the supervisor talked to Patty’s co-workers. Her co-workers begin to relate that there have been a number of changes in Patty’s behavior over the last several weeks. Her co-workers express concerns that she is “not right,” “acting strange,” and “heading for a meltdown.”

What should co-workers do? Is there anything that co-workers could have done sooner?

What should supervisor do? What role does supervisor have in keeping “in touch” with what is going on with employees?

2. You are having dinner with a number of friends. One of your friends is talking about her new baby sitter. You immediately know the name, you have knowledge of the baby sitter. The baby sitter in question is a woman with a number of reports of alleged abuse. You want to warn your friend. Do you?

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3. While dining at a local restaurant over the weekend you notice a co-worker having dinner with someone of the opposite sex. The co-worker and dinner guest are laughing and lean in to talk with their heads close over the table. You aren't sure, but you think you saw them hold hands. The situation bothers you because you know the co-worker has been having problems in her marriage; however, you are not sure what you saw. You don't think the co-worker saw you at the restaurant. What would you do?
 4. On your off day, you and a co-worker whom you like, respect, and have been fairly good friends with go out for lunch and shopping. At the end of the day, she shows you an item that you don't recall her purchasing. It isn't an expensive item, you estimate it was under \$5. Something bothers you about it, because you distinctly remember her saying that she was going to put it back. You do not remember her going to the cashier. You aren't 100% sure, but you are almost certain she didn't buy the item. What do you do?
 5. A co-worker, Claire, is having a really tough time in her personal life. It is common knowledge that her husband left her and has filed for divorce. It is a messy, ugly split. There are two children and the kids are still with your co-worker, but the estranged husband is doing everything he can to get full custody of the children. Another co-worker (who has never liked Claire) tells you that he heard that the husband found out that Claire was having a homosexual affair with a woman who the couple was friends with. You have no idea whether this is true or not. What do you do?
 6. One of the operators on your shift is constantly broke. She regularly asks people to loan her a couple of dollars or cover her lunch. She does not reliably pay these loans back. It has been a running "joke" but it is getting tiresome and people are beginning to grumble. She is a pretty good co-worker other than this. You think it is time to stop the withdrawals. Times are tough. How do you handle this?

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7. Why is it that Sally seems to be able to do exactly as she pleases and not get into trouble for it? She can come in late, take a long lunch, leave early and it doesn't seem to be an issue with the supervisor. There aren't any repercussions for any of her behavior. You and another co-worker believe that Sally gets special treatment. Is there something "going on" between her and one of the supervisors? Even if there is, it isn't fair that the rules don't seem to apply to her.

MY PLAN FOR MAINTAINING ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

What barriers exist for me in my efforts to maintain ethical behavior?

What will I do to maintain ethical behavior?
