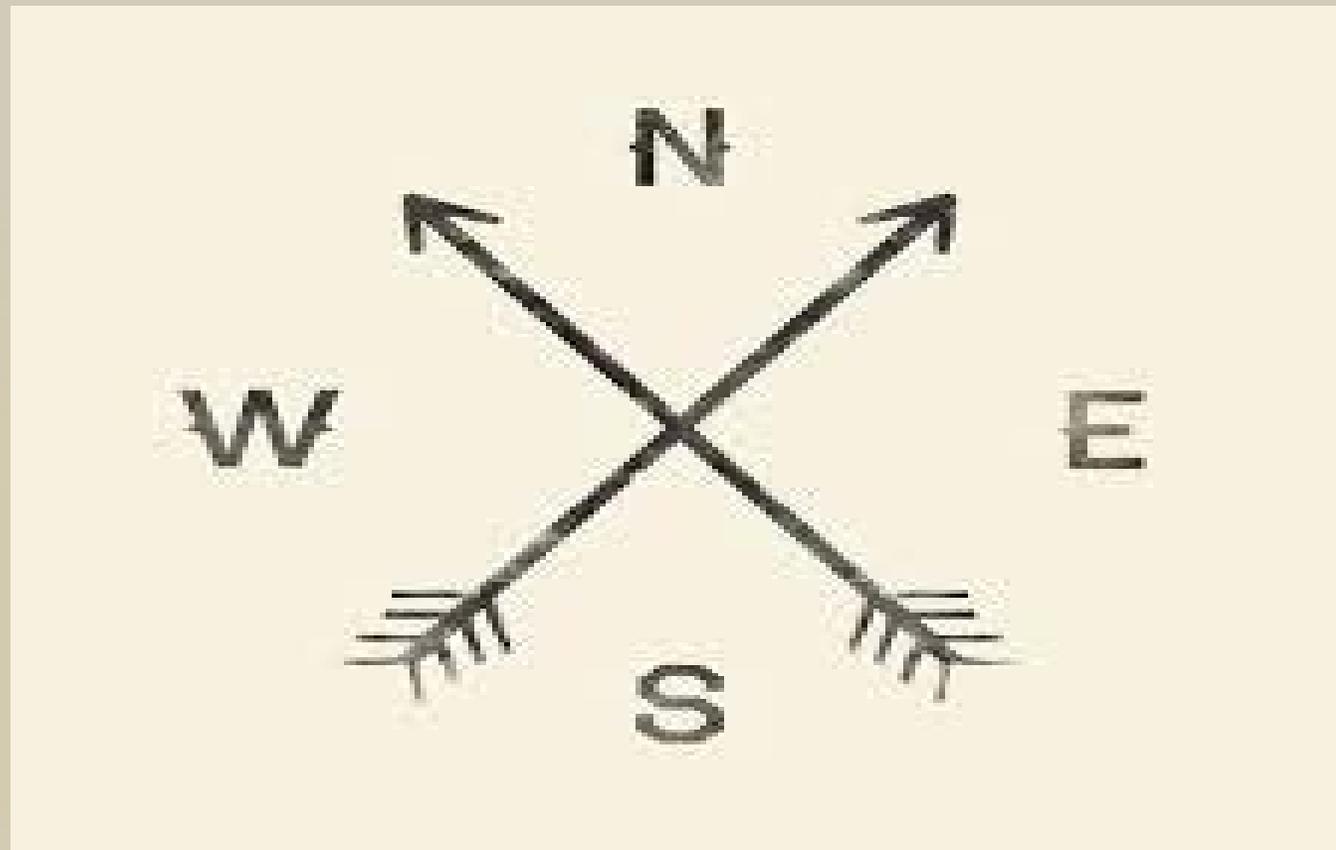




Ethics





Goals for Presentation



1. Understand and put into practice an ethical decision making process.
2. Find resolutions to ethical dilemmas that occur in practice
3. Develop processes to better resolve future ethical dilemmas

Activity – case scenario, small & large group discussion

Ethics Case Scenario:

You have worked for Tribal Social Services as a child protective service worker for approximately two months. So far, you are feeling supported by all of your colleagues and are excited to make a difference in the life of children. You're "on-call" and receive a report from the school counselor of two children ages 10 and 12 of possible physical and sexual abuse, and neglect that is perpetuated by substance abuse. There is not a current open case for the reported family. That evening, you request that law enforcement remove the children from the home and the children are placed with a relative. This is a temporary placement until you can be sure that the children are safe.

The next morning a colleague at the agency asks if he can take over the case. He has been with the agency for five years and states that he is familiar with the family. You state you will consider it. You review the case and discover that there were four similar reports in the past two years without any action or intervention from your agency.

Later that day, you are at a high school basketball game and approached by a parent asking if his cousin is working on the case involving his children in the report you received. Your response is to stall and you let him know that the agency is working out details.

You are unsure about what to do. You are new to the agency and want to fit in with your colleagues, and you worry about getting between your senior colleague and the family. Yet, there are aspects of the case that you are troubled by including the possible endangerment of the children and the conflict of interest of your colleague who asks to work on a case involving his family.

For this case, please discuss the following:

- 1. What facts do you need to know before making a decision?*
- 2. What are the possible harms and benefits of each decision?*
- 3. What are possible methods to weigh out the outcomes to make sure you are acting ethically?*
- 4. If you were to break an ethical rule, could you justify each of the three standards?*
- 5. What are actions you could take in the future to avoid getting caught in a similar dilemma?*

Defining Ethics

- ▶ "Doing the right thing in a given circumstance-behaving ethically" (Strom-Gottfried, 2007).
- ▶ Make decisions with competing obligations, duties, and possible harms and benefits that may result in an ethical dilemma.





Guiding Ethical Principles



- ▶ **Autonomy/Self determination:** the client has the right to make his or her own decisions
- ▶ **Fidelity:** Duty to keep our promises –our word is our currency
- ▶ **Beneficence:** the duty to promote good - Are our actions for the good of the client(s)?
- ▶ **Non-maleficance:** Do no harm or responsibility to prevent harm- Is it in the client's best interest?
- ▶ **Justice:** The requirement that each person should be treated fairly.



Part I - Ethical Decision Making Process

1. State the problem
2. Check the facts: Does the evidence support the alleged facts?
3. Have all the needed facts been gathered? Which facts are irrelevant?
4. Has the relevant research and literature been identified?



Part II - Develop a list of alternative actions

Discern what is ethically at stake in relation to each of the alternatives

1. The relevant ethical principles
2. The likely harms and benefits to the parties involved
3. Relevant laws
4. Relevant agency policies
5. Relevant rights and the responsibilities that correspond with those rights

Part III - Test alternatives

- ▶ **Ethical standards test:** Does one option fit better with the relevant ethical principles, agencies policies and laws than the other alternatives?
- ▶ **Outcomes test:** Does one option promise more benefit or less harm than other alternatives?





Part IV - Check the conclusions



- ▶ **Publicity Test:** Would the decision stand if it were published in the newspaper?
- ▶ **Colleague Test:** What would colleagues say about the problem and the selected option? Would colleagues raise any problems with the selected option?
- ▶ **Professional Test:** What might the profession's governing body or ethics committee say about the option? Would the response be sound?
- ▶ **Organizational Test:** What would the agency's ethics officer or legal counsel say about the selected option? Would the response be sound?

Part V - Plan for prevention of the problem in the future.



Confidentiality



Confidentiality is necessary for a productive and human service work.

Why confidentiality is important?

- ▶ Necessary for autonomy, thus it requires informed consent.
- ▶ Clients have control over secrecy, their thoughts & plans, & this should be respected. Respect the rights of clients to have secrets and their decision to share them or not. This shows respect for the relationship.
- ▶ The pledge of confidentiality creates an obligation.
- ▶ Fidelity is important in any profession, we keep promises.
- ▶ Confidentiality aids society.
- ▶ Clients would not seek services if they knew that their personal information was scattered to others.

Breaking Confidentiality

“Duty to Warn” Standards

- ▶ Serious
- ▶ Imminent
- ▶ Harm





Dual Relationships/Boundaries



Dual relationships occur when two or more roles are assumed at the same time with a client, co-worker, or other related professionals.

Dangers

- ▶ imbalance of power between the two people and the possibility of exploiting the client.
- ▶ creation of a possible quid pro quo (favor for favor) situation, or at least the potential for there to be expectations on the client's part of a favor returned.

Poses the possibility of or actual conflicts of interest

Dual Relationships/Boundaries:

- Serving in any professional capacity in any program on the case of a friend, acquaintance, or relative;
- Using one's position to obtain information for a friend or relative who is a client or colleague;
- Socializing or attending certain events outside work;
- Accepting gifts from clients or former clients, or colleagues;
- Becoming emotionally and/or sexually involved with clients; and
- Supervising a friend

Not possible to avoid completely. The key is learning how to manage them well.

A key question to ask is “whose needs are being met?”



Breaking Ethical Rules??



Possible times when one might consider breaking ethical rules when resolving a dual relationship. Three aspects to consider:

1. ***Would a rational person understand why you broke the rule?***

Does it make sense to do so?

2. ***Is the universal standard applied?***

If you break the rule for one person, you need to do it for everyone.

3. ***Your breaking of the rule should be publicly known.***

You should be transparent & not hide that you broke the rule.

(Gert, 1988)



Boundary Discussion

1. What ethical issues can occur in a multidisciplinary setting such as schools?
2. Should information sharing be done at all levels if it's for the benefit of the child, or only on the professional level?
3. Are there any ethical limits regarding your personal life & friendships with colleagues and attending social events outside the work setting?
4. How much can one share with a spouse, friend, pastor, on Facebook, or by e-mail?

Questions

