

INTEGRATING SOCIAL WORK ETHICS AND VALUES

A historic and defining feature of social work is its focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Thus, its mission is rooted in a set of core values that are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective. These values are: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. These core values are reflected in the NASW Code of Ethics, which establishes a set of specific ethical standards to guide social work practice. The focus of the ability, **Integrating Social Work Ethics and Values**, is to enable students to understand the process of ethical decision making. Ethical responsibilities flow from all human relationships; specific applications of the code must take into account social, professional, and personal context. Reasonable differences of opinion may exist among social workers with respect to the ways in which values, ethical principles and ethical standards should be rank-ordered when they conflict. In a given situation, social workers must apply informed judgment and consciousness of the ethical standards of the profession to make decisions and actions that are consistent with the spirit and letter of the Code of Ethics. Social work ethical behavior will result from student's personal commitment to uphold the profession's values and act ethically.

Foundation Level

- A. Understands and is committed to the mission of social work: enhancing human well-being and helping meet basic human needs of all people, client empowerment, service to people who are vulnerable and oppressed, focus on individual well-being in a social context, promotion of social justice and social change, and sensitivity to cultural and ethnic diversity.

Knowledge: understands the basis of social work from micro and macro points of view; understands social work values and ethical principles; is cognizant of the limits of confidentiality to clients; knows the requirements of informed consent; understands the vagaries of self determination.

Skills: establishes professional relationships built on regard for individual worth and dignity; engages the individual/client group in making independent decisions; facilitates active participation and partnership in the helping process; assists client systems to obtain needed resources; advocates effectively for the development of social institutions that are more humane and responsive to human needs; validates the feelings and views of others; displays a commitment to social justice, a vision of community and global connectedness and identification with the purposes and ethics of the social work profession.

Possible Assessment Activities: identifies underlying values in a situation, problem or concern.

- B. Understands the ethical and legal regulations related to social work.

Knowledge: comprehends the purposes and content of the NASW Code of Ethics; understands the Standards in the Ohio Code of Conduct and their application in social work practice; is familiar with current judicial decisions and liability issues which have defined practice.

Skills: distinguishes between privileged communication and confidentiality; describes common waivers of privileged communication; engages in behaviors which reduce vulnerability to malpractice lawsuits; provides accurate information to clients about their legal rights.

Possible Assessment Activities: articulates the major sections of the Code that impact on social work practice at the direct service, supervisory, and administrative levels; describes major features of the Code of Conduct of the Ohio Licensing Law; completes a comparative analysis of the standards in the Code of Ethics and the Ohio Code of Conduct; describes legislative and judicial decisions which have influenced the Code of Ethics.

- C. Aware of personal value system and its impact on professional work.

Knowledge: is aware of his or her personal values, biases and prejudices and the impact they have on client/organization/group; is cognizant of personal strengths and limitations.

Skills: identifies issues which promote self analysis; identifies and separates personal issues and values from

professional practice in the context of diverse population, client systems, agency personnel and multidisciplinary systems; examines the relationship between own values and action, identifying congruence among values and between values and behavior; accepts and utilizes constructive feedback regarding values.

Possible Assessment Activities: examines behavior patterns for the values expressed through journaling, simulations, and case studies; engages in personal value clarification; identifies areas for personal growth and implements a corrective plan.

Advanced Level

- A. Develops skills in the systematic analysis of ethical dilemmas.

Knowledge: understands the characteristics of ethical dilemmas; knows a framework for ethical decision-making.

Skills: anticipates and clarifies conflicting values and ethical dilemmas; assesses and develops a plan of action; takes a position on an ethical issue, defends it, gives evidence, and provides alternatives.

Possible Assessment Activities: assesses and engages in ethical decision making in relation to specific ethical situations; analyzes the ethical implications in specific social policy.

- B. Develops competency in the identification of one's own ethical stand in relation to controversial issues.

Knowledge: understands the use of relationships, conscious use of self, and the concept of readiness

Skills: thinks critically and articulates the beliefs, ethics, and value system with knowledge and skill; handles conflict responsibly; assumes responsibility for personal ethical conduct; discourages and aides in the correction of unethical conduct of colleagues; promotes ethical practices of the organization with which he or she is affiliated; assumes responsibility for the quality of practice and secures opportunities for continuous growth in professional knowledge and skills.

Possible Assessment Activities: analyzes ethical situations encountered in terms of the hierarchy of personal values; negotiates a conflictual situation posed in a role playing exercise; identifies areas for personal growth and implements a corrective plan.

ETHICS ABILITY WORK GROUP

Baila Miller; Debbie Jacobson; Karen Kaye, Advisor; Clara Simmons, Chair