Social Work
Ethics: The Professional Anchor in the Storm of Practice
Stacey Popejoy, LMSW

Hello!

Brief Introductions at tables:
- Name?
- Where do you work?
- Best thing about being a social worker!

Today’s Agenda
- History of the Code of Ethics
- Ethical Dilemmas: What are they?
- Applied learning
- Personal Misconduct…YIKES!!
- Self Care as an ethical obligation

Learning Objectives:
1. Increase knowledge of the history and purpose of the NASW Code of Ethics.
2. Increase knowledge of ethical dilemmas and how to avoid and identify them.
3. Increased skill in ethical decision making.
NASW Code of Ethics: The History

Purpose of Codes of Ethics
- Address “problems of moral hazard”
- Address issues of professional integrity
- Address issues that concern professional’s duty to serve the public interest

Social Work Code of Ethics Timeline
- Mary Richmond 1920’s
  - First published code (informal)
- American Association of Social Workers 1947
  - First formal code
- NASW 1960
  - 14 Proclamations
    - “I give precedence to my professional service in public emergencies”
    - “I respect the privacy of those I serve”
  - 15th proclamation regarding nondiscrimination added in 1967
The Path to the Modern Day
Code of Ethics

1977 NASW establishes a task force to revise the code

1979 Code of Ethics:
- This code is intended to serve as a guide to the everyday conduct of members of the social work profession and as a basis for adjudication of issues in ethics when the conduct of social workers is alleged to deviate from the standards expressed or implied in this code. (NASW, 1979, p.v)
- This code was revised twice eventually including 82 principles for social workers.

The Path Continues

1996 Code revision: served as the foundation to the current code of ethics.

Most recent changes/revisions to the code took place 2017 and included significant consideration to technology in the provision of social work services.

Mission and Values

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. (NASW, Preamble)
Core Values

- Service
- Social justice
- Dignity and worth of the person
- Importance of human relationship
- Integrity
- Competence

Current NASW Code of Ethics

1. Ethical Responsibilities to Clients
2. Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues
3. Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings
4. Ethical Responsibilities as Professionals
5. Ethical Responsibilities to the Social Work Profession
6. Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society

2017 Code Changes
Why our Values are Important

Beliefs—Feelings—Actions

“Ethical behaviour comes from a social worker’s individual commitment to engage in ethical practice. Both the spirit and the letter of this Code of Ethics will guide social workers as they act in good faith and with a genuine desire to make sound judgements”. CASW Code of Ethics (2005)

Ethical Decision Making
Ethical Rules Screen

- Examine the Code of Ethics to determine if any of the Code rules are applicable. These rules take precedence over the worker’s personal value system.
- If one or more Code rules apply, follow these.
- If the Code does not address itself to the specific problem, or if several Code rules provide conflicting guidance, use the Ethical Principles Screen.

Ethical Principles Screen

- Ethical Principles Screen (EPS)
  - Principle of the protection of life
  - Principle of equality and inequality
  - Principle of autonomy and freedom
  - Principle of least harm
  - Principle of quality of life
  - Principle of privacy and confidentiality
  - Principle of truthfulness and full disclosure
In a 2000 study spanning 10 years, Kim Strom-Gottfried found that poor practice resulted in 160 violations, SEXUAL MISBEHAVIOR 102 violations, and competence issues in 86 violations.
Ethical Obligation to Colleagues

- 2.06(a) Sexual relationships with colleagues and co-workers.
- 2.07 Sexual harassment
- 2.08(a) Impairment of Colleagues (talk with colleague)
- 2.08(b) Impairment of Colleagues (report)

“Most, if not all, of the patients I worked with led consistently unhealthy lifestyles. They tended to me masochistic, to have low self-image, and to be self-destructive in their personal and professional lives. Eighteen of the 60 had been married more than once and the rest either unmarried or separated. Those who were married had frequent affairs. They all worked excessively long hours...All tended to be perfectionist and were usually never pleased with their work. “I know I can be better” “I could have done more” tend to be the refrain. They tended to conduct their lives, both at home and in the office, in such a way that they found little relief from their chores. They have a desperation to be needed and rationalize taking drugs as “doing something for themselves”. They tend to be risk takers personally and with their clients.” -Freudenberger 1986

Signs of Potential Boundary Violations

- Giving personal contact info to clients.
- Accepting or responding to social media invitations.
- Overly affectionate with clients.
- Spends unusually long periods of time with clients.
- Change in dressing around clients.
- Talks frequently about client.
- Begins “running into” clients at social functions.
- Shares personal information with clients.
- Gives money to clients.
- Increased use of drugs and alcohol.
- Client appears overly interested in SW.
- Clients family begins to complain.
- SW family begins.
- Notice a difference.
- General work performance has decreased.
Self Care: It’s the Ethical Thing to do

1. Ethical Responsibilities to Clients
2. Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues
3. Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings
4. Ethical Responsibilities as Professionals
5. Ethical Responsibilities to the Social Work Profession
6. Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society

- Service
- Social justice
- Dignity and worth of the person
- Importance of human relationship
- Integrity
- Competence

BOUNDARIES
With Colleagues
With Clients
With Work
With Self

What is your Self Care Plan?