



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

NASW CODE OF ETHICS OVERVIEW

Michael Budlong, LCSW, LISW

[NASW Code of Ethics Overview – YouTube](#)

CSWE Competencies Covered

Competency # 1: Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly

Competency # 2: Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice





ETHICAL CRITERIA



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- PARTICIPANTS WILL DISTINGUISH BETWEEN VALUES, MORALS AND ETHICS
- PARTICIPANTS WILL IDENTIFY RELEVANT NASW CODE OF ETHICS STANDARDS THROUGH CASE SCENARIOS
- PARTICIPANTS WILL USE THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES SCREEN TO GUIDE DECISIONS



ETHICS VS. MORALS

Morals vs Ethics Explained in 2 Minutes w/Memes

ONE IS PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE ON
APPROPRIATE CONDUCT WHILE THE
OTHER IS PERSONAL BELIEFS ABOUT
“RIGHT AND WRONG”



VALUES

- ARE PERSONAL AND DEFINED AS:
 - A PRINCIPLE, STANDARD OR QUALITY ONE CONSIDERS INHERENTLY WORTHWHILE OR DESIRABLE
 - THEY ARE WHAT MOTIVATE AND FULFILL US.....
 - IN ESSENCE, A VALUE IS WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO US AND DEFINES AS INDIVIDUALS.... IT GIVES OUR LIVES MEANING



MY GUIDING PERSONAL VALUES

- LIST THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT VALUES THAT SERVE AS “GUIDEPOSTS” FOR HOW YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE....
- HOW DID YOU ARRIVE AT EACH THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE?
- HOW HAVE/DO THEY IMPACT YOU PERSONALLY OR PROFESSIONALLY?



MY CORE VALUES

- *IT'S NOT HARD TO MAKE DECISIONS ONCE YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR VALUES ARE" – ROY E. DISNEY*
- [How to Find Your Core Values | 3 Easy Steps](#)



WHAT ARE MY “CORE VALUES”?

- <https://www.google.com/gasearch?q=persona%20core%20values%20examples&udm=2&source=sh/x/gs/m2/5#vhid=SFYIUZUGX8mLyM&vssid=mosaic>
- <https://heygoalsister.com/what-are-core-values/> (Examples)



NASW CODE OF ETHICS

- ARTICULATES SOCIAL WORK VALUES, PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS FOR PRACTICE
- OUTLINES 51 TOTAL STANDARDS IN SIX SECTIONS:
 - RESPONSIBILITIES TO CLIENTS (16)
 - RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES (11)
 - RESPONSIBILITIES IN PRACTICE SETTINGS (10)
 - RESPONSIBILITIES AS PROFESSIONALS (8)



CODE OF ETHICS

- RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PROFESSION (2)
- RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE BROADER SOCIETY (4)
- ["NASW Code of Ethics Explained \(2024\) | Social Work Ethics & Core Values @HopefulHealingPathway"](#)



HOW MUCH DO I KNOW ABOUT OUR CODE OF ETHICS?

- TAKE THIS 15-ITEM QUIZ ON THE NASW CODE OF ETHICS.....



b. False

1. **The NASW Code of Ethics**
contains everything social workers need to know about making ethical decisions in all their work situations. They do not need to consult outside sources of laws and ethics.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. **Social workers are encouraged**
to volunteer some portion of their time and professional skills without expecting financial compensation (pro bono service).
 - a. True
 - b. False
1. **Social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients. In general, clients' interests are primary. However, social workers' responsibility to the larger society or specific legal obligations may on limited occasions supersede the loyalty owed clients, and clients should be so advised.**
 - a. True
 - b. False



Ethical Decision Making Model

- Social workers are encouraged to use ethical decision-making models that promote critical thinking and reflection.
- A multitude of ethical decision-making models exist.
- The following model, or ethical decision-making steps, is an accumulation of aspects from the models included in the literature and is based on a best practice approach



RANK ORDER THESE PRINCIPLES

- Guaranteeing the self-determination and autonomy of my clients
- Assuring social justice for my clients
- Ensuring my decisions cause “the least harm”
- Guaranteeing confidentiality and privacy to my clients
- Protecting my client’s life
- Always being truthful and transparent



A PRACTICAL MODEL

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLrDkX2tyJQ&feature=youtu.be> (Steps for Social Workers)
- STEP ONE: WHAT ARE THE FACTS?
- STEP TWO: “WHAT’S THE MAIN DILEMMA”?



STEPS THREE - SIX

- STEP THREE: WHO ARE THE KEY PLAYERS?
- STEP FOUR: ARE ANY SPECIFIC CODE OF ETHICS PRACTICE STANDARDS RELEVANT? WHICH ONES?
- STEP FIVE: ARE THEY EITHER VAGUE OR CONTRADICTIONARY?



DECISION MAKING STEPS (CON'T)

- STEP SIX: DO I NEED TO CONSULT THE “ETHICAL PRINCIPLES SCREEN” FOR GUIDANCE?
- STEP SEVEN: WHAT WOULD I DO OR RECOMMEND BE DONE IN THIS SITUATION?



SOCIAL WORK'S CORE VALUES

- SOCIAL WORK VALUES (6) FROM THE NASW CODE OF ETHICS
 - *SERVICE*
 - *SOCIAL JUSTICE*
 - *DIGNITY AND WORTH OF THE PERSON*
 - *IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP*
 - *INTEGRITY*
 - *COMPETENCE*



THE CODE OF ETHICS AND ME

- COMPARE YOUR EARLIER PERSONAL VALUES TO THE NASW CODE OF ETHICS VALUES
- ARE THERE SIMILARITIES OR “OVERLAP”?
- HOW DO I THINK MY PERSONAL VALUES LED ME TO THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION?
- DID I REALIZE THAT AT THE TIME?



MORALS VS. ETHICS

- MORALS GUIDE AN INDIVIDUAL IN DECIDING “RIGHT AND WRONG”, “GOOD OR BAD”
- ETHICS ARE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS THAT DEFINE “APPROPRIATE VS. INAPPROPRIATE”
- OUR VALUES AND MORALS CAN SOMETIMES CONFLICT WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS.....
- EXAMPLES.....



ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

- PRINCIPLES ARE IDEALS OR GUIDEPOSTS ALL SOCIAL WORKERS SHOULD ASPIRE TO
- EACH OF THE PREVIOUS VALUES HAVE AN ETHICAL PRINCIPLE THAT FLOWS FROM IT



NASW ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

- OUR PRIMARY GOAL IS TO HELP PEOPLE IN NEED....
- WE SHOULD CHALLENGE SOCIAL INJUSTICE WHERE IT EXISTS....
- EACH PERSON HAS DIGNITY AND WORTH....
- WE HELP PEOPLE BY BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH PERSON....



ETHICAL PRINCIPLES...

- WE ACT IN A TRUSTWORTHY WAY WITH CLIENTS AND PROMOTE ETHICAL PRACTICES IN OUR ORGANIZATIONS....
- WE STRIVE TO ENHANCE OUR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AND APPLY THEM IN PRACTICE....



Ethical Rules Screen

- With the Ethical Rules Screen, Dolgoff provides a step to help social workers understand that the Code takes precedent over their own personal values.
- A social worker who has done an ethical self- assessment will have a better appreciation of the values they hold that are personal versus those that they hold as a professional.
- The Ethical Rules Screen suggests that if one or more provisions of the Code apply, the Code should be followed.



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.

One or more of the Code rules apply

Follow the code rules

The Code does not address the specific problem or several Code rules provide conflicting guidance

Use the ethical principles Screen

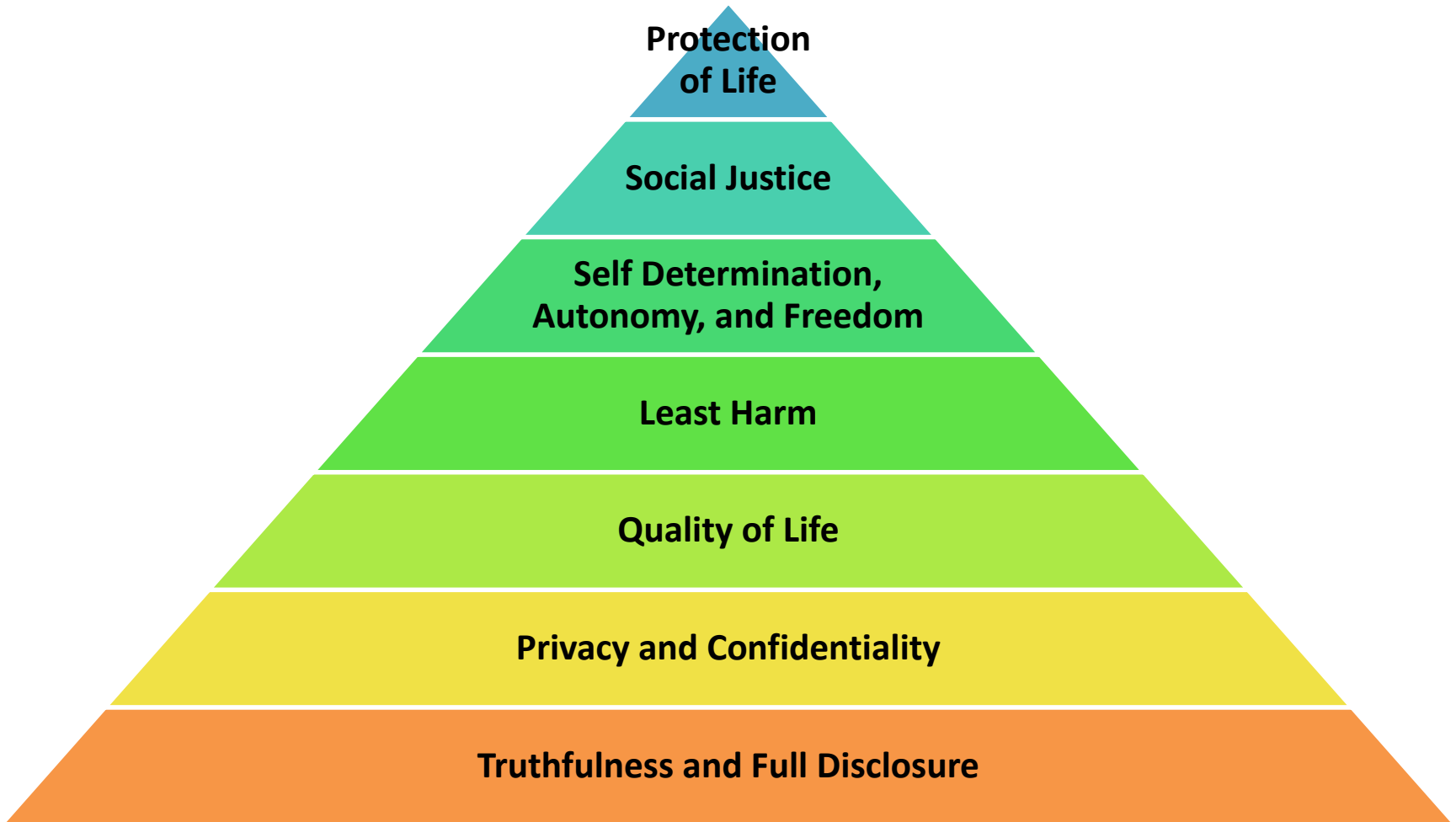


Ethical Principles Screen (EPS)

- When consulting the Code of Ethics, there may be times when the Code will not specifically address the dilemma, or when the Code provides conflicting guidance. In these instances, social workers may find it helpful to use the Ethical Principles Screen developed by Dolgoff, Loewenberg, & Harrington (2005).
- The ethical principles screen involves the ranking of ethical principles.
- Higher level principles take precedence over lower level ones in those situations where a specific code or standard may not apply.



Ethical Principles Screen (EPS)



Rank Ordering Ethical Principles

Protection of Human Life

applies to all persons, it is the most basic of all rights

Social Justice

all persons in the same circumstances should be treated equally

Self determination, Freedom, and Autonomy

the clients right and ability to make their own decisions should be respected

Least Harm Principle

when faced with two options that have potential to cause harm you choose the option that will result in the least amount and least permanent harm



Rank Ordering Ethical Principles

Quality of Life

quality of the various domains of well being in a client's life

Right to Privacy and Confidentiality

professionals have a duty to protect the privacy of clients to the greatest extent possible consistent with laws and professional ethics

Fully Disclose all Relevant Information

social workers are expected to inform clients of the interventions they will be using, confidentiality, fees, potential outcomes, etc.





THE CASE OF JIMMY

- Jimmy is a passive, disturbed adolescent who is currently in the agency's residential program. He is frequently bullied by older residents. You have worked hard to find a less restrictive therapeutic foster home in his home community with the planned move in two weeks.... His mother is excited....Then things change per your Supervisor....



ADMINISTRATIVE VS. CLINICAL DECISIONS

- You are informed by your Supervisor that the move must be cancelled due to budget considerations....
- Remaining in the agency's group placement would preserve a higher per diem rate and the financial picture currently is of concern to the CEO and Finance Director....



WHAT TO DO?

- AS HIS SOCIAL WORKER WHO HAS BEEN WITH HIM FROM THE BEGINNING OF HIS PLACEMENT, WHY IS THIS A CONCERN TO YOU?
- LET'S EXPLORE RELEVANT NASW COE STANDARDS.....

RELEVANT ETHICAL STANDARDS IN THE CASE

1. WHAT STANDARDS COME TO MIND (RESPONSIBILITIES TO CLIENTS – 1.01; 1.02)
2. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE AGENCY – 3.09 (a), (b)....
3. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION – 5.01 (a), (b).....



USING DOLGOFF'S ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

- USED WHEN ETHICAL STANDARDS ARE EITHER VAGUE OR IN CONFLICT WITH ONE ANOTHER....
- EXAMING THE “PYRAMID” FOR GUIDANCE....
- WHERE DO YOU END UP? WHAT IS YOUR COURSE OF ACTION NOW?





AN INNOCENT MAN IS IN PRISON

YOU ARE A THERAPIST IN AN INPATIENT ADDICTIONS CENTER..... YOU HAVE BEEN SEEING A MALE PATIENT FOR SOME TIME AND HAVE ESTABLISHED A GOOD RELATIONSHIP
HE TELLS YOU IN SESSION THAT HE WAS INVOLVED IN A ROBBERY AND SHOT THE SECURITY GUARD, WHO LATER DIED....



YOUR DILEMMA

- HE SHARES THAT HE WAS NEVER CAUGHT BUT ANOTHER MAN WAS ARRESTED FOR THE CRIME, CONVICTED AND SENTENCED TO A LENGTHY PRISON TERM, WHERE HE NOW SITS....
- CONSULT BOTH RELEVANT STANDARDS BEFORE EXAMING THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES PYRAMID....
- WHAT IS YOUR COURSE OF ACTION AS A



CONTNUED....

- HE KNOW YOU ARE BOUND BY CONFIDENTIALITY AND REMINDS YOU OF THAT FACT....
- WHAT OTHER STANDARDS ARE RELEVANT HERE?



POTENTIAL HARM VS. CONFIDENTIALITY

- You are seeing a 15- year-old client therapy.
- You communicate your standard confidentiality statement in the first session.
- Later on, the client discloses she is dealing drugs with her 19 -year-old boyfriend, recently released from prison for dealing.
- Her parents have forbidden her from seeing him and want to know if she somehow is....



ETHICAL ISSUES PRESENTED TO THE THERAPIST

- Is there enough potential harm to the client to break confidentiality and inform the parents?
- Is there an ethical obligation to report the client's or her boyfriend's illegal behavior? To Whom and Why?
- What does the Ethical Principles Screen advise?



NASW STANDARDS THAT ARE RELEVANT

- 1.01 – COMMITMENT TO CLIENTS
- 1.02 – SELF- DETERMINATION
- 1.07 – PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY
- 5.01 (a) – INTEGRITY OF THE PROFESSION
- 6.01 (a) – RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE BROADER SOCIETY (“General welfare of the local community”)



CONSULTING THE PYRAMID

- WHAT ETHICAL PRINCIPLES ARE RELEVANT HERE?
- WHICH ONES TRUMP OTHERS IN THE CASE?
- WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN THIS SITUATION AND WHY?
- HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN OR DEFEND YOUR ACTIONS?



AN ETHICAL ISSUE I HAVE ENCOUNTERED IN MY CAREER

- SHARE AN ETHICAL ISSUE YOU HAVE HAD TO GRAPPLE WITH IN THE PAST.....
- DID YOU CONSULT THE NASW CODE OF ETHICS FOR GUIDANCE?
- WOULD KNOWLEDGE OF THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES SCREEN HAVE BEEN HELPFUL?
- HOW DID THE SITUATION RESOLVE ITSELF?



CONCLUSION

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu4CjJj7pf8&t=571s> (Ethical Principles Screen)