

Chapter 2

EPAS Competencies Covered: EP 2.1.1, EP 2.1.2, EP 2.1.3, EP 2.1.4

Values and Professional Ethics: An Outline

1. Values
2. Professional Values
3. Ethics
4. Morality
5. Professional Ethics
 - a. Figure 2.1 The Ethics of Interpersonal Relations
 - b. Figure 2.2 The Overlap Between General and Professional Ethics
 - c. Exemplar 2.1 Diana Can't Go Out
6. Law and Ethics: The Problem of Unethical but Legal Behavior
 - a. Characteristics of Law
 - b. Differences Between Law and Ethics
 - c. Conflict Between Law and Professional Ethics
 - d. Malpractice and Unethical Behavior
 - i. Table 2.1 The Most Serious Offenses
 - ii. Table 2.2 Necessary Conditions to Be Met to Win Malpractice Suits
 - e. Protection against Malpractice Suits
 - i. Table 2.3 Possible Bases for Malpractice Suits
 - ii. Table 2.3 Protections from Malpractice Actions
7. Who Needs Professional Ethics?
8. Codes of Professional Ethics
 - a. Exemplar 2.2 John Miller's Return to State Hospital
9. A Brief History of Codes of Professional Ethics
 - a. U.S. and International Codes of Ethics
10. Exercises
11. Suggestions for Additional Readings
12. Websites of Interest

Narrative:

In chapter 2 the authors' objective is to look at the complexity and commonalities between a personal value base, morality, and ethical backgrounds, when compared to the values and ethics outlined by the social work profession. Emphasis in this chapter is placed on the 2008 NASW Code of Ethics and the Law. Oftentimes professional ethics are in direct contradiction to current laws, thus unethical behaviors can occur along with malpractice claims. Also included is a history of codes of professional ethics and the introduction of a global perspective on social work ethics.

True/False Questions:

1. Values are concerned with what is right or wrong, whereas ethics is concerned with what is good or desirable.

ANS: F PG: 25

2. The court decided in *Tarasoff v. Regents* that confidentiality is more important than the welfare of the community.

ANS: F PG: 32

3. The function and purpose of a code of ethics is to provide guidance and direction, not to answer all ethical questions.

ANS: T PG: 41

4. One reason for the incongruence between a person's professed values and his behavior is that what he says he values is not what he really values.

ANS: T PG: 26 EPAS: 2.1.1.b.c

5. There can be dire consequences if a social worker practices in accord with professional ethical principles when those principles are contradicted by agency rules or societal values.

ANS: F PG: 29

6. The core value of service means that social workers consider helping others above their own interests.

ANS: T PG: 24 EPAS 2.1.1.a.c

7. There is a lack of agreement as to whether client participation, self-determination, and confidentiality are among basic social work values.

ANS: F PG: 25

8. Morality consists of principles or rules of conduct that define standards for right behavior.

ANS: T PG: 26

9. Social work practitioners take their basic professional values from values held by the larger society in which they practice.

ANS: T PG: 24

10. Laws seldom change and this constancy provides societal stability.

ANS: F PG: 30

11. According to the NASW Code of Ethics, when ethical behavior and the law are in conflict, social workers must always follow the law.

ANS: F PG: 31 EPAS: 2.1.2.d

12. Civil suits to recover damages resulting from unprofessional actions or inaction are known as malpractice suits.

ANS: T PG: 34

13. Practicing beyond the scope of one's competence is a possible basis for a malpractice suit.

ANS: T PG: 37 EPAS: 2.1.2.b.c

14. There are some people who feel that social workers do not need a code of ethics, that all they need is common sense.

ANS: T PG: 39

15. Attorneys were the first professionals to adopt a code of ethics.

ANS: F PG: 43

16. Both the NASW Code of Ethics and the British Code require social workers to respect human rights as expressed in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

ANS: F PG: 46

Multiple Choice Questions:

17. Which of the following is always unethical?
- A. Discussing a client's issues with friends
 - B. Engaging in a romantic relationship with a person who was your client ten years before
 - C. Referring an anorexic teen to another social worker because you lack expertise in treating eating disorders
 - D. Failing to report the illegal status of a client to the immigration authorities

ANS: A PG: 33 EPAS: 2.1.2.a.b

18. The core values of the social work profession as stated in the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers include:
- A. Dignity and Worth of a Person
 - B. Social Justice
 - C. Integrity
 - D. Importance of Human Relationships
 - E. All of the above

ANS: E PG: 24 EPAS: 2.1.2.b

19. When malpractice has occurred, there are three legal approaches that can take place.
- A. Civil lawsuits, Criminal lawsuits, Supreme Court lawsuits
 - B. Criminal complaints, Criminal lawsuits, Licensing board complaints
 - C. Civil lawsuits, Criminal complaints, Licensing board complaints
 - D. Judicial action, Police reports, Suspension of license

ANS: C PG: 33

20. A code of professional ethics is created to:
- A. Protect the professional ideal of self-regulation
 - B. Provide the public with competent professionals
 - C. Protection from litigation
 - D. Provide guidance when encountering ethical dilemmas
 - E. All of the above

ANS: E PG: 41

21. Which of the following is NOT true about law and social work practice?
- A. Laws mandate that certain services be provided for all who need them.
 - B. Laws authorize payment for some services.
 - C. Laws require social workers to report certain information.
 - D. Laws regarding social work are passed at the federal level and provide consistency across the country.

ANS: D PG: 30

22. When a social worker practices in a manner which is consistent with the profession's mission, values, ethical principles and standards, the social worker is demonstrating which of the following?
- A. Honesty
 - B. Integrity
 - C. Competence
 - D. Caring

ANS: B PG: 24 EPAS: 2.1.2.a.b.d

23. The core value of social justice involves:
- A. Social workers pursuing change on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups.
 - B. Social workers ensuring that those who oppress others are brought to justice.
 - C. Social workers empowering clients to be aware of how they are oppressed.
 - D. All of the above

ANS: A PG: 24 EPAS: 2.1.1.a

24. The core value of dignity and worth of the person consists of:
- A. Social workers treating all clients equally.
 - B. Social workers empowering all clients to reach self-actualization.
 - C. Social workers treating all clients with care and respect for cultural and ethnic diversity.
 - D. All of the above

ANS: C PG: 24 EPAS: 2.1.1.d, 2.1.2.a.b, 2.1.4.b.c

25. The core value of competence consists of:
- A. Social workers seeking supervision when confronted with ethical dilemmas.
 - B. Social workers striving to increase their professional knowledge and skills and applying them in practice.
 - C. Social workers obtaining regular supervision for ethical dilemmas and obtaining the highest level of social work education
 - D. All of the above

ANS: B PG: 24 EPAS: 2.1.1.e, 2.1.3.a. b. c, 2.1.4.d

Essay Questions:

- 26. Explain the differences between good/bad decisions, good/good decisions and bad/bad decisions.
- 27. Identify and explain the process a client must go through to win a malpractice case against a social worker.
- 28. How can social workers avoid malpractice actions by clients?
- 29. Choose 5 out of 10 arguments provided by the authors as to why some social workers believe professional ethics are not needed, and explain the five you chose.

30. Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between professional values and professional ethics.

Discussion Topics:

31. Discuss the overlap between general ethics and professional ethics. See Figure 2.1 on page 27-28.
32. Brainstorm with class, then review Table 2.2, The Possible Bases for Malpractice Suits. Have the students provide examples for each situation and discuss how to correct the ethical dilemmas.
33. Discuss what students think about the following statement: “Ethics is not primarily concerned with getting people to do what they believe to be right, but rather with helping them to decide what is right” (Jones, Sontag, Beckner and Fogelin, 1977, pg. 8).
34. Discuss the gap that is sometimes found between personal and professional values.
35. Discuss the legal and ethical requirements when an HIV-positive client admits to his social worker that he continues to share needles or engage in unprotected sexual relations without notifying his partner of his conditions?
36. Discuss some of the possible bases for malpractice suits.

Class Exercises:

37. Given the following case study, have the students discuss their personal values versus what the profession states their six core values should be (p. 24). Also, discuss issues of confidentiality, informed consent, privileged communication, reporting procedures, and racial injustice.

Maria is a new social worker in a state psychiatric hospital. During a treatment team meeting she is told that Dr. Lewis spoke with her client's father about his diagnosis and treatment at the local health club. Maria knew her client (age 21) did not sign consent for his family to receive any information about his hospital stay or treatment. Maria became enraged calling Dr. Lewis a “towel head with his turban wrapped to tight.” Maria left the team meeting and reported Dr. Lewis to the hospital director and patient advocate. Later that same afternoon, Maria's supervisor called her into her office to discuss what happened and to talk about comments made about Dr. Lewis.