

# **Decision Making and Intervention Ethics**

Maya O'Neill, University of  
Oregon

# Legal Dos and Don'ts in Work with At Risk Youth

(McWhirter et al., ARY, 2004)

- In an emergency, avoid Display of anger or sarcasm toward the client
- Document your actions fully & professionally
- Consult frequently with colleagues
- Maintain good staff communication
- Deal with the entire family/microsystem
- Know the code of ethics in your field
- Continue to update professional training, maintain records on professional development

# What jobs actually require ethics?

- Psychology and human services (counseling, research)
- Teaching (or any job related to children)
- Law, government, public policy, etc.
- Medical jobs
- Management
- Sales
- Parenting
- What jobs DON'T require ethics???

# What are the ethical considerations?

- Juanita is a teacher in a public school in Springfield. She is talking to another teacher about a student, Jason, and she mentions that this student is on the “free lunch” program. She tells the other teacher that he and many of her children on this program seem to have behavior problems, and she wonders if this has to do with their parents’ incomes.

# Decision Making

- How do you know what you know?
- Biases
  - Effects of question wording
  - Fundamental attribution error
  - Attributional biases
  - Groupthink
  - Self-fulfilling prophecies

# Effects of Question Wording

- The biggest problem in America today is education, true or false?
- The biggest problem in America today is education or poverty?
- The biggest problem in America today is education, poverty, or the environment?
- The biggest problem in America today is what?

# Fundamental Attribution Error

- Salience
- Actors tend to attribute their behavior to the situation
- Observers tend to attribute the behaviors of other actors to disposition (i.e. traits, abilities, and motives)

# Common Attributional Biases

- Self-serving bias
- Egocentric bias
- Positivity effect
- Negativity effect
- Variability Bias



# Groupthink

- Illusion of invulnerability leading to over-optimism and excessive risk-taking
- Rationalizing or discounting warnings
- Unquestioned belief in group's inherent morality
- Stereotyped views of adversaries
- Pressuring dissenters
- Illusion of unanimity
- Self-censorship of deviations from apparent group consensus
- Group members who guard the group from information that might challenge the group's complacency

# Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

- Self Perpetuating Social Beliefs
- The Pygmalian Effect
- Self-Fulfilling Racial Stereotypes

# Laws and Ethics

- Reporting and confidentiality guidelines
- Ethical mandates versus aspirational ethics
- NOHS Ethics (check the webpage)
- American Psychological Association ethics guidelines
  - <http://www.apa.org/>

# What are the three most important rules in ethics?

- 1. CONSULT!
- 2. CONSULT!
- 3. CONSULT!

# How can you prevent ethical violations (on your part, and on the part of others)?

- Know the laws and guidelines
- Know yourself
- Discuss ethics
- Be an example and a resource
- Document

# Practice Ethical Dilemmas

- Get into groups of 5-6 students (doesn't have to be your lab group)
- Spend 10-15 minutes discussing your group's scenario (see previous overhead)
- Use your handouts on NOHS ethics and the ethical decision making information/models
- Create a list of which ethical dilemmas are present in your scenario, and which NOHSE guidelines from are related to this scenario

# Take Home Message

- There can be many different “right” answers
- You already know a lot!
- Use guidelines, colleagues, models, to help guide your decisions
- Self-awareness is very important!

# Ethics Resources

- Lauren, Shoshana, and other University faculty, as well as your University Supervisors
- Your volunteer or job site supervisors and coworkers
- NOHSE ethics guidelines
- APA ethics guidelines
- Books such as Ethics in Psychology (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1998), Ethics in Psychotherapy and Counseling: A Practical Guide (Pope & Vasquez, 1998), and Ethics for Psychologists: A Commentary on the APA Ethics Code (Canter, Bennett, Jones, & Nagy, 1999)
  - \*Please note that these books are biased toward the practice of psychology, and seek out resources in your chosen area of human services.