

ETHICS



STEPS FOR THE ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Part 1: Determine what is known.

- State the problem.
- Check the facts: Does the evidence support the alleged facts?
- Have all the needed facts been gathered? Which facts are irrelevant?
- Has the relevant research and literature been identified?

Part 2: Discern what is ethically at stake in relation to all alternatives.

- The relevant ethical principles.
- The likely harms and benefits to the parties involved.
- Relevant laws.
- Relevant agency policies.
- Relevant rights and the responsibilities of the worker.

Part 3: Test the Alternatives.

- Ethical standards test: Does one option fit better with the relevant ethical principles, agency policies, and laws than the other alternatives?
- Outcomes test: Does one option promise more benefit or less harm than other alternatives?

Part 4: Check Conclusions.

- Publicity Test: Would the decision stand if it were published in the newspaper? Online?
- Colleague Test: What would colleagues say about the problem and the selected option?
- Organizational Test: What would the agency's legal counsel say about the selected option? Would the response be sound?

Part 5: Prevent Future Dilemmas.

- Plan for prevention of the problem in the future.
- What have you learned?
- What changes were made?

WHAT TO CONSIDER IF CHOOSING TO BREAK A RULE OR IGNORE AN ETHICAL STANDARD:

- Do others understand why you broke the rule?
- Does it make sense to do so?
- Is the universal standard applied?
- You should be transparent and not hide that you broke the rule. The fact that you broke an ethical standard should be publicly known.

