**Ethical Decision-Making Scenarios**

Follow these steps for each ethical decision-making scenario below:

1) Determine if the situation is an ethical problem or an ethical dilemma;

2) If it is an ethical problem, review the standards of the NASW *Code of Ethics* that may guide your action in response to the problem (some *Code* standards are listed after each scenario);

3) If it is an ethical dilemma, follow the steps in the ethical decision-making model to arrive at a course of action. Be prepared to defend your decision!

**Scenario #1**

You are a group home staff member for an agency that provides residential facilities for people with intellectual disabilities. You are known for your ability to provide respectful, informed, and supportive services to residents. You’ve been at this job for 5 years and you enjoy your work, but you’ve been applying to other jobs to see if you might find something with different hours and increased salary. You’ve just received a call from an agency offering you a position, but they would like you to start in three days. While your current employer expects a two-week termination notice, this is not a policy and you are eager to start something new. You’re concerned about leaving the residents you serve on such short notice, but you believe the agency will find someone to replace you fairly quickly. What should you do? 1.01, 1.17, 3.09, 4.03

**Scenario #2**

You work for an organization that provides services to individuals who are visually impaired. You have recently been assigned to assist the Johansson family. Mr. Johansson is visually impaired and his wife and two children have been very involved in helping him with daily personal and professional tasks. In the last year, the youngest child, Sarah, has gone off to college and the oldest child, Robert, has gotten married (although both still live near their parents). Both of Mr. Johansson’s children now want to be substantially less involved with their father’s activities. Mrs. Johansson has recently been diagnosed with fibromyalgia and is working on pain management. Robert has contacted your agency because Robert and his sister want their father to accept professional services which would increase his capacity to accomplish tasks independently. When you conduct your first visit with Mr. Johansson, he makes it clear that he does not want outside services and wants to continue with the arrangement of having his wife and children help him. All family members are feeling guilty and resentful. In a private conversation with you, Robert asks if you could please convince his father to accept services and keep him and his sister informed of their father’s progress. (Adapted from: [http://naswil.org/news/chapter-news/featured/ethics-corner-ethics-and-disability/](http://naswil.org/news/chapter-news/featured/ethics-corner-ethics-and-disability/)) 1.02, 1.07, 4.04
**Scenario #3**
You are a supervisor in a life skill enhancement program for youth with a diagnosis of autism. You have recently assigned your social work intern, Sarah, to work on social skills with a 15-year-old client, Margaret, who has self-identified as transgender for two years. Sarah is an excellent intern and you are glad to have her because the agency is seriously short-staffed right now. Sarah comes to you to say that she doesn’t think transgender “is a real thing” and that it is a mental disorder. She says she will feel uncomfortable around Margaret and doesn’t feel qualified to work with her. She requests that you assign Margaret to someone else. 1.05, 3.01, 3.02, 3.08, 4.01, 4.02, 6.04d

**Scenario #4**
You have been providing case management for a family with a four year old, Scotty, who has been diagnosed with gross motor developmental delay. You have developed a good working relationship with the parents, Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy, who both came to the US as refugees from Liberia when they were in their late teens. In informal conversation with them, it came up that you all grew up in the United Methodist Church and that you currently attend Methodist churches in different towns. In your third meeting with the parents, Mrs. Kennedy said she has been struggling with feelings of extreme sadness over “Scotty’s condition” and was wondering if you would mind praying with them. She thought this would help her feel better since her religion, both in Liberia and America, has always been an important part of family life. 1.04, 1.05, 1.06, 4.01, 4.03, 4.06

**Scenario #5**
You are an MSW-level manager of several programs at an agency that provides a variety of services to people with physical or intellectual disabilities. Five of your staff recently went to Winnipeg over the weekend for a bachelorette party for one of them, Tamara, who is leaving the area after getting married. The group of friends stayed at a resort, gambled, went to shows, and enjoyed exotic cocktails. Tamara posted some pictures from the trip on her Facebook page. The site is private, with access exclusively for family and friends of the bride and groom. Today, the groom’s uncle, who is on the board of directors of your agency, called you to complain about the morals of the agency’s staff. He had been to the site and was offended by the group’s “lascivious behavior.” He told you that “as a member of the board, I’m embarrassed by their behavior and they make the agency look bad. I expect you to take action.”

(Adapted from Strom-Gottfried, 2015) 1.06, 3.01, 3.03, 4.03, 5.01

(Compiled by Amy Phillips, Minot State University Social Work, amy.phillips.1@minotstateu.edu)