



Ethical Situations



Review each situation and identify the ethical value(s)/principle(s) involved.

Please do not devote time to discuss the decision you would make during this exercise.

#1: Yvonne, a 35 year old African-American CYS caseworker and two of her colleagues, one of whom is also African-American, were the first to arrive at the picnic shelter in the community park for the agency staff picnic. As they started to unload some of the food items from their car, a local police cruiser pulled in and parked beside Yvonne's car. The officer, who appeared to be Caucasian, asked the three women what they were doing. Yvonne explained that they were CYS caseworkers who were setting up for the agency staff picnic. The officer asked Yvonne for her driver's license and registration. He also asked the other African-American caseworker for some form of identification. He asked additional questions of them, but did not ask to see any identification from the Caucasian caseworker. When Yvonne asked the officer for an explanation of the differential treatment, she was told, "Keep your mouth shut, girl." Then he drove away. When the CYS Director arrived at the picnic, Yvonne and the other caseworkers who experienced the encounter explained what had happened, communicating that they were still upset. Yvonne hoped the Director would make an official complaint to the Police Chief concerning this treatment. The Director's response was to underscore the importance of maintaining a working relationship with the local police who frequently are called to assist caseworkers with child abuse investigations and potentially dangerous situations. The Director said that the greater good was to maintain a positive relationship with law enforcement and suggested that Yvonne let the matter drop.

Ethical Value(s)/Principle(s):

#2: Grace Land, an experienced CPS worker, has concluded her investigation of suspected abuse of a three year old child with a spiral fracture of the right arm, which had been reported by the treating emergency room physician after the mother sought treatment for her daughter. The mother said she thought the injury most likely occurred when she was holding the child's hand as they were about to step off the curb to walk across the street. When the child had suddenly tried to pull away from the mother to dart into the street just as a car was coming, the mother pulled the child back towards her. The child twisted her body away from the mother in a further attempt to cross the street, Grace had always been taught that spiral fractures were typically caused by abuse; but in this case, she believed the mother was telling the truth and did not intend to harm the child. There are no other risk factors noted on the risk assessment. Grace's supervisor Elvis Coverbutt instructed Grace to indicate the report and let the mother appeal the decision if she wants to. Grace is conflicted.

Ethical Value(s)/Principle(s):

#3: While reviewing a foster home study in the record of one of her workers, CYS Supervisor, Susan Sappho, noticed that the caseworker, Prudence Powell, referred to the same sex couple being studied as "lesbians." The caseworker does not typically make such direct sexual references of any of her heterosexual clients being studied to become foster parents.



Ethical Situations (continued)



Ethical Value(s)/Principle(s):

#4: Bob Villa is a CYS caseworker, who has made every effort to assist Ms. Beauty to obtain suitable alternative housing or to make needed home repairs so that her three children can be returned from foster care. All of their efforts of finding a different safe home have been unsuccessful. All of the people who have promised to help her to make the needed home repairs have failed to carry through on their promises. Bob believes that he could complete the home repairs in a day or two on his own time in order to make reunification possible. He thinks there is some “chemistry” between Ms. Beauty and himself, but they have never discussed it.

Ethical Value(s)/Principle(s):

#5: Cedrick Owl, a midnight to 8 a.m. crisis worker in the CPS unit, is required to review his significant decisions with his supervisor, John Daniels. These cases are primarily those when children might be coming into emergency care and where serious physical and sexual abuse has occurred. “Rick” has often noticed that John’s speech is slurred or that there are lengthy pauses between his questions and John’s answers. Sometimes, he feels John’s decisions leave children at risk and the agency in a potentially liable position. On more than one occasion, Rick has heard a woman, presumably John’s wife, screaming at him in the background.

Ethical Value(s)/Principle(s):

#6: James Portal is a CYS caseworker who works in the placement unit. He is exploring a placement for 14-year-old, Deirdre Disruptive, who is in emergency shelter care. She has a mental health diagnosis of Oppositional Defiant Disorder and a low average IQ. Some of her teachers think she also has a possible attention deficit disorder, but she has not been tested for that. She is in shelter care because she ran away from a group home placement and they will not take her back. She originally came into care because of truancy and parent/child conflict. The permanency goal for Deirdre is reunification. Jim has found only one placement willing to take Deirdre. It is the St. Anthony’s Home for Children & Youth, which is located four hours away. If placed there, Deirdre and her mother would not be able to visit. Deirdre said she would run away again if she could not see her mother every week. The only other option might be a specialized individual foster placement arranged by a private provider. This placement would require a lot of extra time on Jim’s part and much more expense for the agency. In last month’s staff meeting, the Director announced that there would likely be staff cut-backs if the placement costs continued to climb. Jim’s girlfriend just started working at the agency in the intake unit and would likely be one of the first worker’s to be let go if staff cuts occur.

Ethical Value(s)/Principle(s):