Ethics and Values in Advocacy

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Agenda

- Define ethics
- Discuss agency values, guidelines and/or code of ethics
- Common values in advocacy
- Standards in advocacy

Ethics

- noun
  - 1.
    - moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity.
    - "medical ethics also enter into the question"
    - synonyms: moral code, morals, morality, values, rights and wrongs, principles, ideals, standards (of behavior), value system, virtues, dictates of conscience
    - "your so-called newspaper is clearly not burdened by a sense of ethics"
  - 2.
    - the branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles.

What are your personal and professional values?

- Personal values
- Agency values
- Common for the two sets to intertwine
- 7 grandfather teachings
  - Wisdom
  - Honesty
  - Truth
  - Respect
  - Love
  - Bravery
  - Humility



Code of Ethics and Guiding Values

- Set forth standards, principles and values to guide conduct and decision making
- Policies often are developed from a code of ethics and guiding values
- These set of standards, principles and values will ultimately protect the client from exploitation
- Some principles will be extremely clear, while others may be ambiguous (requiring input/advise from a trusted supervisor)
  - Respect – clear and easy to understand as a value/principle
  - Confidentiality - It seems clear, however imagine taking a call where you hear a client's partner tell you to call the cops because he's going to kill her, while she asks you not to….

Common Values of Advocacy

- Respect
- Integrity
- Compassion
- Autonomy
- Safety
- Confidentiality
- Competence
- Cultural Competence

Respect

- Golden Rule : Treat a survivor how you would want to be treated
- Respect a survivor's:
  - Wishes
  - Rights
  - Dignity
- Example of when it may be considered difficult:
  - A survivor decides to leave shelter and move back in with his/her abusive partner
  - This can cause an advocate/service provider to feel worried, anxious, concerned, upset, etc.
  - The advocate/service provider must respect that survivor's wishes and actions and provide as much support as they can to increase safety

Integrity

- The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness.
- Maintain continual awareness of organization’s mission, profession’s values and individual ethical standards.

Compassion

- Sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others
- Understanding of coping mechanisms in place
- Understanding of

Autonomy + Empowerment

- It is important to understand that the survivor is the “expert”
- Often times, this may be the first time the survivor has the opportunity for independence in choices
- Promoting autonomy:
  - Support survivors in identifying and clarifying their goals
  - Support survivors to take necessary steps to achieve their goals
- Important: A survivor should never be “required” of anything to receive services
  - Example: A survivor forced to attend a group in order to receive shelter.
  - This removes his/her autonomy

Safety

- Value the physical, emotional and psychological safety of all individuals
- Belief that no victim or child should live in fear of any form of intimate partner violence

Confidentiality

- The survivor's information should be protected at all times
- Exception: When there is Consent/Release of Information
- Exception: When there is imminent risk to the well-being of the survivor, service provider or others. (mandated reporting)

- Even when there doesn't seem to be a risk to the survivor, confidentiality is an absolute necessity
  - Example: A father called for his adult daughter at the shelter. The shelter staff confirmed that the daughter was living at the shelter. The shelter worker then lost her job.

Competence

- The ability to do something successfully or efficiently.
- Seek training opportunities to further education and skill level
- Address areas where more skills are needed appropriately
- Seek supervision and guidance

Cultural Competence

- Understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.

- Have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.

- Obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.
- (NASW)

Standards of Advocacy

- Advocacy with the survivor
- Advocacy with colleagues, other service providers and the public
- Advocacy within the field of advocacy

Advocacy with the survivor

- The stated interests of the survivor should be held above those of any other involved person(s) (AUTONOMY)
  - Advocate must disregard their personal convictions and/or beliefs
- Advocates provide guidance and information regarding safety planning (SAFETY)
  - For the individual, their children/family in a multitude of settings
- Believe the survivor's statement of the events as presented (RESPECT/INTEGRITY)
  - Avoid assuming that the survivor will identify their batterer
  - Avoid assuming that the survivor will report to law enforcement
- Provide support without blaming (RESPECT/COMPASSION)

Advocacy with the survivor

- Respect and protect civil and legal rights of the victim/survivor (RESPECT)
- Understand absolute privacy and confidentiality (CONFIDENTIALITY)
  - Exception: laws that require the Victim Advocate to disclose information
- Refer individuals in crisis to another qualified Victim Advocate if a conflict exists (RESPECT/INTEGRITY)
- Refrain from sexual relations with survivors, past and present, and any family members (INTEGRITY)
  - Sexual relations may be exploitative and disrespectful of the individual in crisis and can erode trust.
- Always have best interest of the individual through actions and avoid any conflict of interest or gain on the part of the Victim Advocate or the organization (INTEGRITY/COMPASSION)
- Enhance safety by utilizing resources within the community to protect the survivor (COMPETENCE/SAFETY)

Advocacy with others

- Interact with coworkers and colleagues in respectful ways (RESPECT)
  - This advances respect for the practice of advocacy
  - Improves services for domestic and sexual violence victims.
- Refrain from criticism of others in regards to advocacy (including other advocates) (RESPECT)
- Offer equal respect and dignity for other disciplines working to assist victims of domestic and sexual violence (RESPECT/COMPASSION)
  - Understand that we all have jobs to do and how can we ultimately work together to enhance safety and end violence

Advocacy with others

- Educate and promote awareness to colleagues about the complexities involved in crimes of domestic and sexual violence (COMPETENCE)
- Promote *consistent* quality of services and safe space for survivors (COMPETENCE)
- Uphold the laws/codes within the jurisdiction you work in (RESPECT/INTEGRITY)
  - Even when laws/codes present unfair barriers or unfair obligations upon survivors.
  - Continue to educate lawmakers about barriers/unfair obligations

Advocacy within the field

- Uphold high personal and professional standards of behavior in personal and private life
- Do not discriminate against any one individual based on:
  - age, gender, disability, ethnicity, race, national origin, religious belief or sexual orientation.
- Maintain confidentiality
  - Do not reveal the name or other identifying information about survivor without clear release of information.

Advocacy within the field

- Do not use position as advocate to:
  - secure gifts, monetary rewards or special privileges or advantages
- Report mistreatment of a crime victim to appropriate authorities
  - Must have written permission of the individual harmed
- Report any conduct unbecoming or having negative impact on the integrity of the tribe/organization/project to proper authorities

Resources

- Standards adapted from:
  - Advocate Code of Ethics: Institute for Native Justice