Ethics & Boundaries for Rural Practice
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Welcome!
I am glad you’re here!

Zoom
Workshop Agenda

- NASW Code of Ethics
- What does it mean to be rural?
- Privacy & Confidentiality
- Confidentiality and Informed Consent
- Telehealth
- Resources
- Distributive justice
- Boundaries & Dual Relationships
- Types of boundaries and dual relationships
- Guidelines, Considerations, and Strategies to Setting Healthy Boundaries
- Case Study & Reamer’s Ethical Decision-Making Model
- Wrap Up

Introductions

- In dyads or triads
  - Your name
  - Place/type of employment
  - If you could eat one food forever…. 
  - If I gave you $20 to spend immediately and ON YOURSELF…
  - If you had one day all to yourself, first thing you would do…

Ethics & Boundaries

- Ethical Dilemma
  - Dilemma: two horns
  - Equal in size, equal in complexity
  - Lifelong learning
  - Licensure
  - Consultation
  - Self assessment

"I’m not here to be right—I’m here to get it right.”
—Brené Brown
Why is Ethical Practice Important?

- Helping professionals confront unique and difficult problems.
- Obligations to our clients, their families, communities and society
- Issues:
  - Confidentiality
  - Informed Consent
  - Client Self-Determination
  - Responsibility to Protect
  - Value Differences

“The NASW Code of Ethics offers a set of values, principles and standards to guide decision-making and everyday professional conduct of social workers. It is relevant to all social workers and social work students regardless of their specific functions or settings.”

Retrieved from https://www.socialworkers.org/about/ethics/code-of-ethics

NASW Code of Ethics
Content of the Code of Ethics

“The NASW Code of Ethics is intended to serve as a guide to the everyday professional conduct of social workers. The Code has four sections:

1. Preamble - summarizes the social work profession’s mission and core values.
2. Purpose - provides an overview of the Code’s main functions and a brief guide for dealing with ethical issues or dilemmas in social work practice.
3. Ethical Principles - presents broad ethical principles, based on social work core values, that inform social work practice.
4. Ethical Standards - includes specific ethical standards to guide social workers’ conduct and to provide a basis for adjudication.”


Core Values

- Service
- Competence
- Social Justice
- Integrity
- Dignity & worth of the person
- Importance of human relationships

Ethical Standards

Section IV of the NASW Code of Ethics contains the Ethical Standards. The Ethical Standards are broken into six specific areas of concern:

1. Social workers’ ethical responsibilities to clients
2. Social workers’ ethical responsibilities to colleagues
3. Social workers’ ethical responsibilities in practice settings
4. Social workers’ ethical responsibilities as professionals
5. Social workers’ ethical responsibilities to the social work profession
6. Social workers’ ethical responsibilities to the broader society
Rural Wisconsin

What is rural Wisconsin?

- Different perspectives based on
  - Population density
  - Place that is NOT part of a city/town of at least 2,500 people
  - Proximity to urban centers
  - Commuter areas
  - Remoteness and access to services
  - Deer and cattle per person
  - Types of land use

Retrieved 01/20/2021 from: https://www.wiscontext.org/putting-rural-wisconsin-map

Wisconsin: Rural-Urban Areas: 2010 Census Data

Retrieved 01/20/2021 from: https://www.wiscontext.org/putting-rural-wisconsin-map
Wisconsin: Rural-Urban Commuting Areas

Retrieved 01/20/2021 from: https://www.wiscontext.org/putting-rural-wisconsin-map

What makes rural practice unique?

Break Out Discussion

- What are some benefits of rural practice?
- What are some challenges of rural practice?
- What ethical issues have you experienced that are directly related to rural practice?
- Have you developed any strategies to deal with them?
Emerging Ethical Issues in Rural Communities

- Increased concerns of privacy & confidentiality
  - Visibility
  - Increased risk of boundary crossings
  - Increased risk of dual relationships
  - Complex issues with social media

- Limited range of services/providers
  - Service deprivation
  - Decreased pool of professional peers
  - Increased risk of social isolation
  - Geographic proximity

- Boundary issues among professional, personal, community roles
  - Increased risk of boundary crossings
  - Increased risk of dual relationships
  - Complex issues with social media

Privacy & Confidentiality

Privacy
Confidentiality
Privileged Communication
• What is Confidentiality?

Confidentiality means that any helping professional is not to divulge any information to anyone that has been shared by a client, without the client’s informed consent.

NASW, 2017

Client Privacy

- Rural practice: What do we know before we ask
- How do we handle “what we know” with what “we need to know”
- Clients are entitled to privacy
  - Need to know

- NASW Standard 1.07(b): “Social workers should respect client’ right to privacy. Social workers should not solicit private information from clients unless it is essential to providing services or conducting social work evaluation or research. Once private information is shared, standards of confidentiality apply.”
Confidentiality in the Engagement Process

- Explain legal or ethical responsibilities related to confidentiality at the first visit.
- Explain the responsibilities of both the worker and client.
- Secure the client's signature on any releases of information.
- Explain what can or cannot be held in confidence.

Confidentiality & Telehealth

- Policies
  - Confidentiality
  - Security
  - Inclusive and equitable distribution
  - Patient informed consent
    - Including safety
  - Training for all

Our Privacy: Social Media & Technology

- Our social media accounts
  - Locked
  - Appropriate
  - Factual
- Posting on public social media accounts
  - Appropriate
  - Factual
  - No client information
- Not a forum for client engagement (NASW, 2017)
Limited Resources

Group Discussion

What are some of the challenges in finding resources for clients in a rural community?

What are some of the ethical decisions you’ve had to make?

ACCESS to Limited Resources
Wisconsin & Rural Access to Healthcare

Primary Health Care Shortage Areas

Mental Health Care Shortage Areas
Wisconsin & Rural Access to Healthcare

Dental Care Shortage Areas

Retrieved from:
http://www.worh.org/library/health-professional-shortage-area-dental-health-care-

Distributive Justice

• Distributive Justice (Reamer, 2015)
  • “Involves the use of ethics concepts and criteria to determine how scarce resources should be divided among people, groups, organizations, and communities.”
  • Not always unique to rural practice
    • COVID-19 vaccines
    • Shelter beds

Staying in our Lane: Key Terms

Professional Domain
• The profession’s area of expertise.

Professional Drift
• Neglect of profession’s traditional purpose and functions in favor of activities associated with another setting.


Boundaries & Dual Relationships

“Professional boundaries are defined as the space between a professional’s power and the client’s vulnerability. The power of the professional comes from the position we hold and the access to private knowledge about the client.”

Professional Relationship Considerations

- Boundaries exist on a continuum
  - Can be hard to know if someone has blurred or violated boundaries
- If you are bending rules toward the personal:
  - Reflect on why you are doing this
  - Utilize consultation/Point out concerns of colleague
- Be aware of relationships that are conducive to becoming personal:
  - Type of setting
  - Specific professional role
Boundaries

- **Healthy Boundary**: the respected space between the worker’s power and the client’s vulnerability.
- **Overlapping Boundary**: having contact with clients outside the professional relationship where there is no significant role conflict or boundary crossing.
- **Boundary Crossing**: departing from or not supporting commonly accepted practices or safe connections.
- **Boundary Violation**: acts or actions that moves professional relationships to the unprofessional.

Overlapping Boundaries

Think about a time you or a colleague experienced an overlapping boundary or potential boundary crossing.

- Talk about it in small groups:
  - How did it occur?
  - How did you navigate it?
  - What did you learn from the experience?

Physical Boundaries

- **Maybe?**
  - **Client permission**
    - Provides momentary comfort
    - The client is clear about intentions
  - Further Considerations:
    - Trauma experienced by client
    - The age of the client
    - The gender identification of the client & the worker
- **Don’t:**
  - When possibility of psychological harm
Sexual Boundaries

- No Sexual Contact with Clients
- NASW Code- 1.09:
  - No engagement in sexual activities with current clients, whether consensual or forced
  - Worker assumes full burden of setting boundaries
  - No sexual activities with former clients
  - No services to a person they have had a prior relationship with
- 2.6.3:
  - Workers should not engage in relationships with those they are supervising or teaching

Other Boundary Issues

- Overfamiliarity
  - Discussions of topics unrelated to services
- Personal Gain
  - Taking advantage of a professional relationship
  - Conflicts of interest
- Gift Giving
  - Giving or accepting goods and services
- Providing Services to Family and Friends
- Social Contact
  - Contact with clients outside professional relationship

Boundaries & Self-disclosure

- A worker’s divulgence of personal thoughts, information, feelings, values, or experiences to his or her client (Kohn, 2010)
- Guidelines for self-disclosure:
  - Any self-disclosure should always benefit or be in the best interest of the client.
  - Self-disclosure requires judgment about when, what, and how much to share with a client.
  - Self-disclosure is done to facilitate relationship building.
- Self-disclosure should be for a specific purpose.
### Consequences of Boundary Violations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Consequences</th>
<th>Worker Consequences</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worker dependency</td>
<td>Negative impact on Career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and emotional stress</td>
<td>Implications for license/certification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>Burn-out</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop feelings of mistrust</td>
<td>Negative impact on professional reputation</td>
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### What is a Dual Relationship?

When multiple roles exist between a professional and a client:
- Client is also a student, friend, family member, employee or business associate of worker.

### Types of Dual Relationships

- **Social**: Worker & client are friends or have some other social relationship.
- **Professional**: Worker and client are colleagues in some capacity.
- **Business**: Worker & client have an employer-employee relationship.
- **Communal**: Worker and client live in the community, belong to the same church, etc.
- **Supervisory**: relationships with multiple roles, loyalties, responsibilities and functions.
- **Digital**: Relationships that take place online, such as social networking sites.
Managing Dual Relationships

1. Be alert to potential or actual conflicts of interest.
2. Inform clients and colleagues about potential or actual conflicts of interest; explore alternative remedies.
3. Consult with others in complex cases and document clearly.
4. Study the complexities of entering a dual relationship.
5. Create policies that include the risks of dual relationships.
6. End any dual relationship that causes conflict of interest, harm or distress.

Questions to Ask (or have someone ask you)

- Review relationship from beginning to present
- Are you still objective?
- Can you see all sides of an issue?
- Are you treating a client differently?
- Is your client not held to the same standards?
- Is your client allowed to do things others are not?
- Are you self-disclosing more to one client?

Case Study

- In small groups:
  - Read the case study
  - Work through Reamer's Ethical Decision-Making Model, including identifying relevant standards in the NASW Code of Ethics
Thank you kindly!

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Sources cited:


