



A Framework for Addressing Ethical Dilemmas in School Social Work

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Goals today include:

- Gain knowledge and familiarity with the NASW School Social Work Standards.
- Overview of different philosophical paradigms on ethical decision making.
- Practice and think about our own personal and professional orientation to making difficult decisions.



Introductions

– **Mary Stevens-Krogh, LCSW LSSW**

Currently work for Portland Public School Attendance Program on the K-8 side.

Other school social work roles include managing an ESL Welcome Center for 3 years.


Working for the Multnomah County Touchstone Program for 9 years, which was a school-based family case management program.

Supervised social work students for eight years.



In groups of 2 or 3:

- Share your name and where you work.
- What you hope to improve or gain in thinking about challenging ethical decision making.




NASW has specific standards for School Social Workers

The most recent version was written in 2012
and is based on policy and guidance in NCLB
and the NASW Code of Ethics.

The specific goals of the standards are:

- To establish expectations for school social work practices and services.
- To ensure that school social work services are guided by the NASW Code of Ethics.
- To ensure the highest quality of school social work services will be provided to students and families.
- To provide a basis for advocating for clients' rights to be treated with respect and dignity, confidentiality.
- Access to supportive services, and appropriate inclusion in decision making.
- To provide a basis for the preparation of school social workers and the development of continuing education materials and programs related to school social work services.
- To encourage school social workers to participate in the development and refinement of public policy, at the local, state, and federal levels, to support school success.



Decision making is one
of the most important
ways we communicate
our values.

What values do you
want others to see
reflected in you?

Decisions are lens that bring into focus our own values and then project them out into the world.

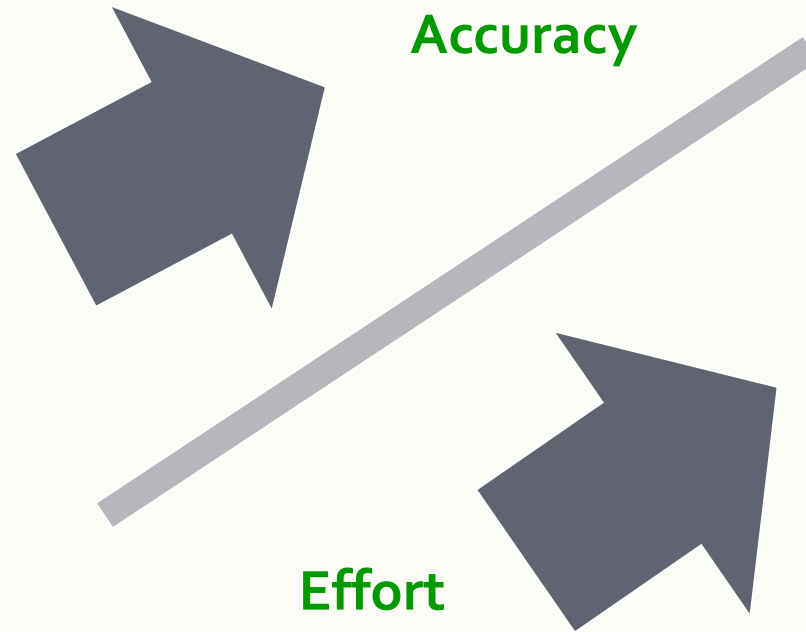


And mirrors that reflect back what we believe has importance and meaning.



Decision making reflects back our values.

- **Decisions are both mirrors and lens.**
- **We are both architects and archaeologists.**



Difficulty of the decision

Ethical Paradigms



Paradigms help us understand our inclinations, analyze decisions outside of our normal behavior, and engage in reflection.

- Ethic of Justice
- Ethic of Care
- Ethic of Critique
- Ethic of the Profession

Ethic of Justice



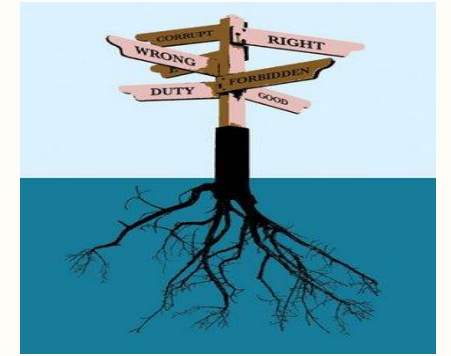
- Built on abstract, impersonal principles such as fairness, justice, and equality.
- Nonconsequential framework.
- Seeks to objectively solve issues with little/no consideration to personal and/or cultural inclinations.
- Those utilizing this paradigm do not necessarily equate law with right. Rather, it is viewed as important to follow law until it can be amended.

Ethic of Care



- Based in compassion and built on a call to nurture and reduce harm.
- Consequential framework.
- Values people over principles. - The first job of the school is to care for children.
- Solutions are tailored to specific details of the individual(s) involved.

Ethic of Critique



- Based in critical race theory and built on a belief in the existence of inequities/injustice and a desire to challenge those realities.
- Consequential framework.
- Often advocates for unbalanced action in the pursuit of equality.
- Views laws as distinct from ethics and as tools to maintain hierarchies.

Ethic of the Profession



- Based on the guiding principals of the school social work profession.
- Built upon the three previous ethics while keeping students paramount.
- Consequential and Nonconsequential framework.
- Adhere to professional codes through the lens of personal experience.
- Consider the standards and needs of the local community.

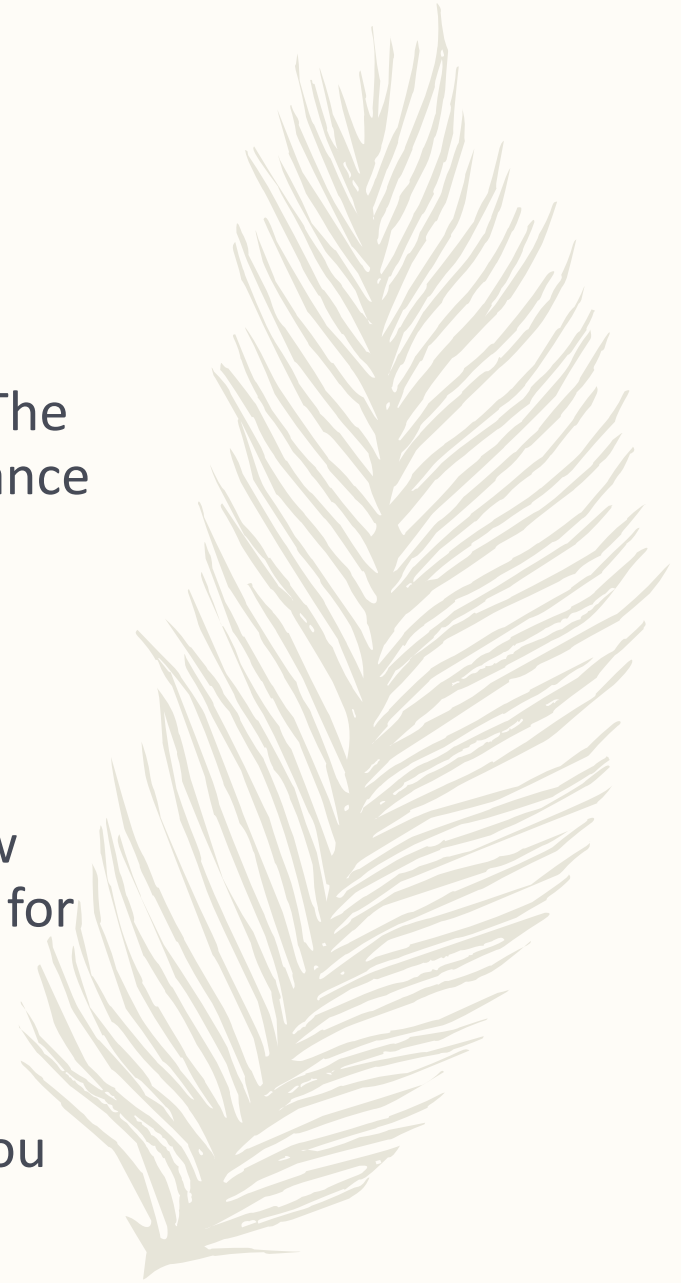
Scenario One:

You are supervising a Native American first year, MSW student at a high poverty elementary school.

The student is working with a highly-impacted Native American family. The parent has asked the student for \$400 in order to be able to pay the balance of their rent. The family has already exhausted all other rent assistance outlets.

The student comes to you and wants permission to help the family with their rent. The MSW student shares that it is part of their culture to view resources as communal and that it would not create a financial hardship for them to help the family.

Using the ethical paradigm your group has been assigned, what would you advise the social work student to do?



Scenario Two:

You are a high school social worker at a school that highly values their basketball team and its impressive record. An 18 year old student discloses to that she was sexually assaulted at a party by one player, but other players were there and all the students were drinking.

She is adamant that she does not want you to report it. She only wanted to share it with someone safe.

You know that by reporting it that a number of the star players could be disqualified from playing, thus eliminating the team's chances of winning.

Using the ethical paradigm your group has been assigned, what would you do?



Summary and Share Out:

As you worked through these ethical dilemmas, which Ethical Paradigm felt the easiest to apply? Which was the hardest?

As we think about decisions being a reflection of our values, which value do you want to share more intentionally?

How do we get support making difficult ethical decisions in our work?

Final thoughts.

Thank you



References:

NASW Standards for School Social Work Services, 2012

Supplemental Ethical Standards for School Social Work Practice,
March 2015

How to make better decisions | Dr. Joe Arvai | TEDxCalgary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQ7SAcFp4so>

Castro-Atwater, Sheri A. & Huynh Hohnbaum, Anh-Luu, (2015) “A Conceptual Framework of “Top 5” Ethical Lessons for the Helping Professions” Education Around the World, vol. 135, 271-289

