

# Ethical Decision-Making Framework

## What are Ethical Issues?

Matters related to decision-making in ethical dilemmas or any issue arising from ethical challenges. An issue becomes ethically charged when it generates value conflict or moral insecurity for those involved.

TIPS	RESOURCES	CONSIDERATIONS
<p><b>When clarifying the problem:</b> Avoid assumptions &amp; third-party information. Gather information from <i>all</i> stakeholders. Identify your personal biases.</p> <p><b>Communication:</b> Establish a safe and welcoming environment for stakeholders to share their views.</p> <p><b>Values/Duties:</b> What values/responsibilities are influencing your decision? Are there conflicting values/guidelines?</p> <p><b>Relationships:</b> Is a power imbalance or previous relational issues influencing this decision?</p> <p><b>Emotional Clarity:</b> Keep negative past experiences out of decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>MCSW</b> Standards of Practice &amp; Code of Ethics</li> <li>• Site or program policy/guidelines</li> <li>• Supervisor or colleagues with related expertise</li> <li>• Regional ethics contact/site or program ethics committee</li> <li>• Manitoba College of Social Workers (<a href="http://www.mcsw.ca">www.mcsw.ca</a>)</li> <li>• Organizational/Professional Mission, Vision, Values &amp; Commitments</li> </ul>	<p><b>Contextual Features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Culture, religion, family dynamics, legal, relational, financial or resource allocation</li> <li>○ Power differentials, emotional impacts, wants and needs of others</li> <li>○ Values: each stakeholder, the organization, community</li> <li>○ Consequences: risks, benefits, outcomes, greatest good for the greatest number</li> </ul> <p><b>Legislation/Organizational Requirements and Obligations</b></p> <p><b>MCSW Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dignity</li> <li>○ Social Justice</li> <li>○ Service to Humanity</li> <li>○ Integrity of Professional Practice</li> <li>○ Confidentiality</li> <li>○ Competence in Professional Practice</li> </ul>

**Clarify the ethical issue(s), List SW values, Apply ethical lens, Risks analysis, Identify solution, Facilitate action plan, Your evaluation**

STEPS	NOTES		
1. Clarify the ethical issue - In a sentence, describe the ethical problem			
2. List the relevant SW Values and Standards of Practice			
3. Apply ethical lens in considering various ethical theories/approaches			
4. Risk analysis - identify potential risks associated with this problem			
Considering the above, List 3 viable options that would: a) prevent or minimize harm to stakeholders b) uphold the priority values/guidelines for this situation c) be a good solution to the scenario	<b>Alternative One</b>	<b>Alternative Two</b>	<b>Alternative Three</b>
5. Identify best solution			
Analyze a worse-case scenario resulting from your option			
6. Facilitate an action plan			
Consider social justice components to your action plan if applicable			
7. Your Evaluation of your chosen action plan is informed by the <b>ETHICAL CHECKLIST BELOW.</b>			

**ETHICAL CHECKLIST**

		1	2	3	4	5
1	<b>Relevant Information Test.</b> Have I/we obtained as much information as possible to make an informed decision & action plan for this situation?					
2	<b>Involvement Test.</b> Have I/we involved all who have a right to have input and/or to be involved in making this decision and action plan?					
3	<b>Consequential Test.</b> Have I/we anticipated and attempted to accommodate for the consequences of this decision and action plan on any who are significantly					
4	<b>Fairness Test.</b> If I/we were assigned to take the place of any one of the stakeholders in this situation, would I/we perceive this decision and action plan to be					
5	<b>Enduring Values Test.</b> Does this decision and action plan uphold my/our priority enduring values that are relevant to this situation?					
6	<b>Universality Test.</b> Would I/we want this decision and action plan to become applicable to all similar situations, even to myself/ourselves?					
7	<b>Light-of-Day Test.</b> How would I/we feel and be regarded by others (working associates, family, etc.) if the details of this decision & action plan were disclosed					
8	<b>Total Ethical Analysis Confidence Score.</b> Place the total of all circled numbers here.					
<b>How confident can you be that you've done a good job of ethical analysis?</b> 7-14 not very confident; 15-21 somewhat confident; 22-28 quite confident; 29-35 very confident.						

Adapted from TEN-STEP METHOD OF DECISION MAKING AND ETHICAL CHECKLIST: Doug Wallace and Jon Pekel, Twin Cities-based consultants in the Fulcrum Group (651-714-9033; email at [jonpekel@atti.com](mailto:jonpekel@atti.com)).