

Ethics & Boundaries and Home Visiting

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Learning Objectives

- Participants will have an understanding of how ethics and boundaries impact relationships with families
- Participants will learn how to identify potential conflicts of interest and ethical dilemmas
- Participants will learn strategies for managing conflicts and dilemmas
- Participants will learn about agency infrastructure to support reflective practice and on-going supervision



The Responsibility of the Professional

- **Commitment to ethical practice**
 - Professional Codes of Ethics
 - Procedural safeguards
 - Agency policies
- **Provide relationship-based intervention**
 - Building partnerships and trust with families
 - Empathy and Transparency



How Does the Natural Environment Affect Intervention?

- Opportunities
- Challenges



Cornerstone of Ethics

“Ethics is the defining quality that says I am a professional” Samara Fritchman

First Codes established in 1947

- Do no harm
- Do not exploit
- Do not impair your judgment

Why do codes exist?

- Summarize principles of a profession
- Identify core values of a profession
- Provide guidance for practice
- Socialize new practitioners
- Protect families, organizations, practitioners



Ethical Codes

- Codes are necessary, but not sufficient
- Ethical codes do not guarantee ethical behavior
- Ethical decision-making involves a process
- There are No Answers, Only Choices
Mel Gray & Jill Gibbons

Apitz, 2009, Fritchman, 2010

Key Topics

- Confidentiality & Privacy
- Informed Consent
- Client right to self-determination
- Competence (includes cultural competence)
- Conflict of Interest
- Record Keeping
- Relationships with clients
- Payment for services
- Termination of services



Building Rapport

- Consider the first face to face contact with a family
- Sometimes a great deal of information is disclosed by the family
 - Family history
 - Financial information
- This is the starting point for creating professional boundaries

Building Rapport

- Cultural awareness/sensitivity
- Procedural safeguards, parental rights, consent forms
- Skills needed to build relationships & rapport : *mutual respect, trust, empathy, shared power, reciprocal communication, shared vision*



Barriers to Building Relationships with Families

- Family's perception of the purpose of the relationship
- Family has not had positive experiences with other professionals in the past
- Parent's fear about child being seen as different from peers & view professional as reminder of child's disability
- Other life factors
- Adolescent parents have unique challenges

(Lea, 2006)

Setting Boundaries

- Clarify roles and expectations from the beginning
Keep in mind agency/program philosophy
- Be aware of own personal values, beliefs, and emotions
 - take time to discuss in supervision
 - what pushes my buttons?
- Be aware of own desire to be liked by a family

(Allen & Tracy, 2008)



Case Example

- What are the kinds of reflective questions do you have?
- What might you discuss /reflect on with your colleagues and/or supervisor?
- Who would you feel comfortable discussing this case with and why?
- How would you protect the family's confidentiality? Should you?
- What professional codes of ethics apply?
- What are the ethical concerns?
- How might these considerations impact your decision-making process?
- What are the consequences of taking action on certain things, or not taking action with other things?
- What are the perspectives of others involved in serving the family?



Disclosing Personal Information

Benefits

- Reciprocity
- Trust-building
- Parents won't feel all alone in their journey
- May help parents process their own feelings about their child or their situation

(Reamer, 2003)

Disclosing Personal Information

Dangers

- Role-reversal, parents feel responsible for helping the professional
- Could make parents uncomfortable
- Could confuse parents about boundaries
- Focus should be on the family and child, it's their time

(Reamer, 2003)



The Practice Continuum

We view boundaries with families on a continuum. It is important to be aware of drifting in either direction



Under-involved

Distant
Cold
Detached

What might cause us to drift?

Over-involved

Enmeshed
Intrusive
Dependant

Some Boundary Questions to Consider in Your Agency

1. How do I know when it is ok to share something personal about myself with a family?
2. When I'm asking questions about the family's life and routines, how do I remain respectful of the family's privacy and their right to determine when to share information? What information do I have the right to know?
3. What if the family invites me to dinner or to a family event? Is it ever ok to attend?
4. What if the family and I have a good connection and want to make plans to spend more time together? Can I support the family by forming a friendship? **Social network friend**

(Allen & Tracy, 2008)



More Boundary Questions to Consider

5. What if I disagree with how the parents choose to discipline their child?
6. What if the family is doing something in the home that makes me uncomfortable. Should I say something? How do I bring it up politely/respectfully?
7. Should I give a client my personal cell phone number or home phone number?
8. When is it ok to give a hug, or put my arm around a client?
9. What if I feel my co-worker is crossing a boundary?

(Allen & Tracy, 2008)



Cultural Awareness and Boundaries

- What are some cultural considerations I need to think about
 - when greeting the family and entering their home?
 - when providing information?
 - when food or drink is offered to me?
 - when medical concerns arise?



Conflict of Interest & Risks of Crossing Boundaries

- Harm to family
- Loss of professional license
- Loss of membership in professional association
- Legal problems
- Damage to agency's reputation in the community
- Personal safety could be compromised

(Kagle & Giebelhausen, 1994)

Ethical Considerations for Service Planning Development

Planning Services

- Respecting autonomy
Family priorities, needs, values. Are we listening to the family?
- What if the parents have differing views about their child and about how the plan should be written?

Transition Planning/Termination

- How are we preparing families for a smooth transition, especially when some families view transition as a loss?
- What does transition/termination mean for my relationship with the family?

When Do Ethics and Boundaries Challenge You the Most?

Examples?

Managing Conflicts and Dilemmas


- Be aware of potential conflicts of interest with families and avoid them before they occur
- It is the professional's responsibility to let families know when he/she sees a potential or actual conflict of interest

(Allen & Tracy, 2008 Jacobson, 2002)

Managing Conflicts and Dilemmas

1. Remain calm
2. Rely on concrete observable facts
3. You don't have to know all the answers on the spot, seek out your supervisor as soon as possible
4. Rely on your foundation in strength-based work and identify family strengths even when the situation is stressful
5. In addition to supervision, seek input from colleagues, professional literature and research, consult professional associations (NASW, NAEYC)
6. Create a plan for moving forward that is sensitive to those involved
7. Team might decide to make a change to the service provider
8. Document conversations and actions
9. Monitor the action plan and adapt as needed

(Boland-Prom & Anderson 2005, Rosin, et al 1993)



Working through Crises or the Unexpected – Questions to ask Yourself

- What is the nature of the crisis?
- Is the family asking me for help?
- Do I feel competent addressing this issue?
- Who should I go to if this is not something I am comfortable taking on?
- What can I learn from this experience to help me feel more competent in the future?

(Rosin, et al, 1993)

Problem-Solving with the Family

- Identify the problem/dilemma/crisis
- Ask how the family feels about the situation
- Ask what the family sees as an ideal outcome
- Identify all the stakeholders and the primary target of the intervention
- Identify key individuals to consult with such as supervisors, medical experts, legal professionals
- Develop a plan sensitive to those involved, include making appropriate community referrals
- Inform stakeholders (parents, grandparents, childcare provider etc.) of action steps
- Put the plan into action
- Document decisions and decision-making process
- Check in with the family to determine if the plan is working or if changes need to be made

(Boland-Prom & Anderson, 1993 Rosin, et al 1993)

Agency Infrastructure and Support for Reflective Practice

- Regular supervision is critical even for the most experienced professionals
- Is reflective practice and supervision a priority for our staff and our agency?
- How can we continue to build this into the work we are doing?
- Where are the opportunities for on-going discussion about ethics and boundaries and learning opportunities from colleagues?

Helpful Websites

National Association of Social Workers

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>

National Association for the Education of Young Children

<http://www.naeyc.org/about/mission.asp>

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

<http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/assuring.pdf>

Division for Early Childhood Code of Ethics

http://www.campbellsville.edu/Websites/cu/Images/Academics/Education/Documents/ECE/Code%20of%20Ethics_updated_Aug2009.pdf

APTA Code of Ethics

http://www.apta.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Policies_and_Bylaws1&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=73012

AOTA Code of Ethics

<http://www.aota.org/Consumers/Ethics/39880.aspx>

ASHA Code of Ethics

<http://www.asha.org/docs/html/ET2010-00309.html>

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Thank You!

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