

NOW WHAT?

ETHICAL PRACTICE WITH RURAL OLDER ADULTS

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SHAWN ALLEN, MSW, LGSW**

OBJECTIVES

- Identify the importance of understanding rural older adults
- Identify factors from the NASW code of ethics
- Define ethical dilemma
- Brainstorm solutions to ethical dilemmas



WHY IS RURAL AGING IMPORTANT?

- Almost two thirds of U.S. counties are classified as rural (i.e., nonmetropolitan)
- One in five older adults live in rural America
- Rural areas have greater proportions of population that are ages 65 or older and 85 or older
- Rural areas are rapidly becoming more diverse ethnically/racially
- Many myths exist about rural older adults that affect the efficacy of programs and policies
- Rural compared to urban older adults have lower incomes and higher poverty rates and are more likely to live in substandard housing
- Rural older people have higher rates of chronic and acute disease
 - Health and social services are less available and accessible to them

WHY IS RURAL AGING IMPORTANT? (CONTINUED)

- Rural diversity or the differences among older populations found in various rural areas has not been well documented
- Certain aspects of rural environments and living uniquely rural and are not found in urban places
- Understanding more about rural aging contributes to the understanding of aging in general

(Hash et al., 2015)

PURPOSES OF THE CODE OF ETHICS

- Identify core values
- Summarizes broad ethical principles
- Helps social workers identify issues when they encounter ethical uncertainties
- Sets standards for professional accountability
- Orientation for new practitioners
- Sets standards for judging unethical behavior

ETHICS ARE NOT...

- Feelings
 - Sometimes, our feelings signal to us that we are facing an ethical dilemma, and we want to “do the right thing,” but feelings also may prevent us from behaving ethically, perhaps out of fear or conflicting desires
- Religion
 - Although most religions incorporate an ethical code of conduct into their belief system, religious faith is not required to be ethical and ethical principles apply to everyone regardless of religious affiliation
- Laws
 - Being ethical does not always entail abiding by the letter of the law, although most laws articulate ethical standards generally accepted by the citizenry

(What Ethics Is Not: Part 1, 2011)

ETHICS ARE NOT...

- What “everybody else does”
 - Ethical behavior is not always aligned with what “everybody else does” or even with what is generally regarded as socially acceptable.
- An exact science
 - It is not based on a set of scientific formulas which consistently yield the same results or predict, with certainty, the right approach in every moral quandary

(What Ethics Is Not: Part 2, 2011)

CORE SOCIAL WORK VALUES

- Service
- Social Justice
- Dignity and Worth of the Person
- Importance of Human Relationships
- Integrity
- Competence

VALUES

- Belief of what is right and wrong
- Personal values develop from familial, cultural, and societal values
- Agency's values
- Client's values
- Professional values

MORAL PRINCIPLES

- Autonomy
 - Respect freedom
- Fidelity
 - Loyalty
- Beneficence
 - Promote good
- Nonmaleficence
 - Do no harm
- Justice
 - Treating everyone FAIRLY

Table 1. Personal and Professional Ethics, Values, and Morals

Professional	Personal
<p>Ethics</p> <p>What relevant standards and expectations are outlined by my profession in its Code of Ethics?</p> <p>How do ethical principles conflict in this case?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If ethical principles conflict, use an ethical decision making process to resolve. 	<p>Values</p> <p>What relevant personal values apply in this case and where did they originate?</p> <p>What professional values are outlined in the Code of Ethics and do any of them apply in this case?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is conflict between personal and professional values, how can I manage my personal values so that I allow my professional ethics to guide me? • Seek supervision, use self-reflection and values clarification process.
<p>Laws and Policy</p> <p>Are there any legal obligations in this case?</p> <p>How do my agency's policies direct me?</p> <p>Are there any conflicts between my profession's ethics and my legal obligations or my agency's policies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal obligations usually supersede professional ethics. • Agency policies should not prevent the ethical practice of social work. • Seek supervision in both cases. 	<p>Morals</p> <p>How does my behavior affect my relationship with others?</p> <p>What would I like to do and/or what would I want done to me in a situation like this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish between personal and professional behavior and obligations.

(Allen, 2014)

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH RURAL OLDER ADULTS

- Self Awareness
 - Be aware of your own values and biases toward aging
- Right to dignity and self-determination
 - Respect and promote
- Apply ethical principles to all older adult clients
 - Give attention to those with limited decisional capacity
- Respect diversity
 - Among older adult clients, families, and professionals
 - Class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation. Etc...
- Address the values of the older adult and families
 - Cultural, spiritual, ethnic values, and beliefs of clients/families

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH RURAL OLDER ADULTS (CONTINUED)

- Relate concepts and theories of aging to social work practice
- Identify issues related to losses, changes, and transitions over the life cycle
- Support clients and families with end of life issues
- Understand the perspective and values of social work in relation to working effectively with other disciplines in geriatric interdisciplinary practice

ETHICAL DILEMMAS

- There are three conditions that must be present for a situation to be considered an ethical dilemma:
 - There is a choice to be made
 - There are different courses of action to choose from
 - No matter what course of action is taken, some ethical principle is compromised

(Allen, 2014)

ETHICAL DILEMMAS (CONTINUED)

- Two types:
 - Absolute (or pure) ethical dilemma
 - Two or more ethical standards apply to a situation but are in conflict with each other
 - Approximate dilemma
 - Complicated situation where a decision must be made, but conflicts between values, laws, and policies

ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN RURAL AREAS

- Dual Relationships
- Poor Practice and Competence
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity and Self-Disclosure
- Professional Isolation
- Informally Acquired Knowledge
- “Small Town Politics”
- Being Professional On/Off Duty

(Daley & Hickman, 2011)

ETHICAL DILEMMAS (CONTINUED)

- What ethical dilemmas have you encountered?

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THANK YOU!

Shawn Allen, MSW, LGSW
Assistant Professor of Social Work
Director of Field Education
Concord University
rallen@concord.edu
304-384-5299