

## Ethical Incidents

Adapted by George Braucht and distributed with the permission of Bill White. From: White, W. L. & Popovits, R. M. (2001, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). *Critical incidents: Ethical issues in the prevention and treatment of addiction*. Lighthouse Institute: Bloomington IL. Available at [www.chestnut.org/LI/bookstore/index.html](http://www.chestnut.org/LI/bookstore/index.html).

1. Exploitation of Service: Bob, who is a recovery coach, works at Cures Them All Program leading counseling groups, conducting intake assessments, and making recovery check-in calls. He likes the job because he's getting lots of overtime and he's quickly getting the hours needed for the CAC certification. On the other hand, he resents the lower-than-counselor pay he receives.
2. Self-Care: Jerome brings great passion and compassion to his job, but he models very poor self-care. He's overweight, smokes excessively, and has chronic health conditions that he does not manage well.
3. Personal Impairment: Mary has been an exceptional on the job for the past three years, but she is going through a very difficult divorce. The strain of the divorce is causing sleep difficulties, significant weight loss, and she is concerned about the stability of her sanity.
4. Drug Use: Ricardo went to a friend's wedding out of town and had several drinks (and joints). Because the episode of use was so short, he chooses to not disclose it to anyone at the agency where he works as a counselor.
5. Personal Bias: Zia has many excellent qualities. During a break one day at the training she tells you that she passionately believes that AA is the ONLY way anyone can achieve long-term recovery, and she expresses disdain for other mutual aid groups.
6. Use of Information Across Roles: Rebecca is very active in the local Twelve Step community in addition to her job. Today at an NA meeting, a Client/Peer with whom a colleague is working mentions the name of new partner who's just moved in with her. Suddenly Rebecca recognizes the partner's name and remembers that several years ago another Client/Peer returned to drug use and caught a sexually-transmitted disease from this person.



## Ethical Incidents (cont.)

7. Conflict of Interest: Raphael works in a local hospital and also owns a recovery residence. One of his former Patients/Peers at the hospital calls him one day looking for a place to sleep because he's recently lost his job, has nowhere to sleep but wants to stay clean and sober.
8. Choice/Autonomy: Charise works in a women's program known for its assertive, some would say aggressive, outreach to women referred by the child welfare system. One woman who appears to have a solid record of attending Celebrate Recovery is uncertain that she wants to continue at Charise's agency. The Client/Peer has not had a positive drug test in 3 months but her case worker insists that she needs intensive services to "fulfill the judge's order."
9. Choice/Autonomy: Roberto was assigned to work with Oscar 4 weeks ago. Now, Oscar asks if he can change recovery supporters on the grounds that he is having a hard time relating to Roberto.
10. Friendship: Raymond shares a lot of common interests with Barry. Over a period of months they developed quite a friendship and now they share some social activities outside of the recovery residence owned by Raymond where Barry lives. That is, they go to the same church and have been fishing together.
11. Gifts: Marie works at the local community mental health agency's addiction treatment unit. Her job serves mostly Native Americans who have been discharged from inpatient treatment and she visits them at their homes on the reservation. One day, a family presents her with an elaborate, culturally-appropriate gift as a token of their appreciation for her support. Marie knows the agency has a policy that prohibits staff from accepting a personal gift however, she is concerned that refusing the gift could harm her relationship with the family and tribe.
12. Competence Boundaries: During an interaction today with Camella, she asks you what you think about the effects of anti-depressant medications on recovery from alcoholism. She is ambivalent about the medication she has been prescribed.
13. When to Refer: Martha has attempted to engage Rita in recovery services for the past 5 weeks, but the chemistry between the two of them has gone from bad to worse as evidenced by the Session Rating Scale (SRS). All efforts to work through these difficulties have not improved the situation or Rita's SRS scores.



## Ethical Incidents (cont.)

14. Discretion: Maria serves women and their families in a women's program. One day while on a break during a family group one of her Clients/Peers tells her, "I want to tell you something, but only if you promise you won't tell my family or the group."
15. Discretion versus Duty to Report: A Client/Peer in your program tells you that he has been using the past week with another person who lives at another recovery residence. It is clear that the other person supplies the drugs and he may be dealing in the recovery residence and the local community. Furthermore, the recovery residence owner is on the city council and is a member of your agency's Board of Directors.
16. Threat to Community: Joe Bob is intoxicated when you stop by his house for a recovery check-in. He says he can't talk right now because he has to return to the bar he just left to pay off a debt. He has his truck keys in his hand.
17. Responding to Unethical Conduct: Susan, who you have been working with for 3 months, discloses to you today that she is sexually involved with a staff member she is seeing at a local treatment center. This staff member is a very prominent person in the local recovery community and is very active in the state addiction counselors/recovery coach association.
18. Role Clarity/Integrity: George has worked with Larry for 2 months when he asks George to be his NA sponsor. George has a distinguished history of successful sponsorship activities.
19. Discretion: As a recovery support service provided by the addiction treatment agency for which you work, you take a group of Clients/Peers to a local recovery support meeting and pick up another one who has just finished a meeting. During the ride home, a Client/Peer discloses information that he has not told his counselor.
20. Discretion: Claude has been in and out of treatment and AA multiple times and he has an off and on relationship with you. You run into Rudy at the grocery store, one of Claude's former counselors with whom you collaborated. Rudy's first comment to you is, "How's our boy doing?"

