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Ethical Football

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Abstract

Using a sports metaphor (U.S. football), this learning activity provides specific examples pertaining to the five major responsibility domains of the Standards for Practice of the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice. Some of the examples illustrate constructive ways of adhering to the standards while others are questionable and may violate some of the standards.

Keywords: Ethics Training, Learning Activities, Child and Youth Care Ethics

Introduction

Ethics are organized principles of shared convictions to help guide the practice of the members of a professional field. These organized principles and shared convictions form the foundation for a written formal code of ethics (Academy for Competent Youth Work, 2015; Mann-Feder, in press). Most human service professional associations require adherence by its members to a professional code of ethics. Similarly, credentialing systems often require ethics education or training to attain and maintain licensing or certification. However, there is a lack of consensus regarding effective approaches to ethics instruction.

Further complicating ethics training in child and youth work is the considerable diversity in the education, experience level, and professional orientations of the child and youth caring workforce. For example, an international study involving 775 child and youth workers from a variety of practice settings in North America exemplifies the diversity of the workforce. The study participants' ages ranged from 18 to 76; education level ranged from no college experience to doctoral level degrees; and practice settings included workers in community based, in-home and out-of-home settings (more than 24 practice settings) (Curry, et.al., 2009). The richness of the

diverse workforce provides many opportunities for robust learning but also challenges for those responsible for designing and implementing effective ethics learning programs.

Approaches to ethics education and training vary considerably according goals, content, methods, materials used, and evaluation methods (Curry, et.al., 2004; Hill, 1999). Common strategies include values clarification exercises, case studies that involve ethical dilemmas, specific instruction pertaining to an ethical code's standards, and use of ethical assessment and decision-making processes (Feeney, Freeman, & Moravcik, 2000). Brophy-Herb, Stein, & Kostelnik (1998) describe a useful framework to conceptualize the development of ethics understanding and therefore guidance for ethics education and training.

1. Awareness—becoming aware of the values that govern one's life; the values of one's professional code; and the specific substance of one's code.
2. Differentiating ethical judgments from other judgments—determining what constitutes an ethical judgement and what does not.
3. Analyzing ethical dilemmas—applying methodological skills and strategies to the resolution of ethical dilemmas.
4. Applying the ethical code in daily practice—translating ethical thinking into ethical conduct (transfer of learning).

The Standards for Practice of the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice in the United States is organized by five major domains of responsibility (Association for Child and Youth Care Practice, 2017).

1. Responsibility for self.
2. Responsibility to children, youth and families.
3. Responsibility to the employer and/or employing organization.
4. Responsibility to the profession.
5. Responsibility to the community.

It is essential that ethical practice be supported by organizations that provide initial and ongoing training and supervision that reinforce the profession's ethical standards. Training resources that support each of the four categories of the Brophy-Herb, Stein, & Kostelnik model can assist educators, trainers and supervisors to promote ethical practice in the varied child and youth work (CYW) settings. Following is a learning activity that focuses on categories one (awareness of the code) and four (examples of applying the code in daily practice). Specific examples of compliance to the five major domains of the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice's Standards of Practice are examined as well as examples of questionable behavior or violations of the standards.

Learning Goals

1. Promote awareness of the five major professional responsibility domains of the Standards for Practice of the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice.
2. Explore examples of compliance and non-compliance pertaining to the five major professional responsibility domains of the Standards of Practice of the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice.

This activity is best used to help clarify standards of practice in each of the five responsibility domains. Learners should have some familiarity with the individual standards within the responsibility domains. Presentation of the standards by the trainer and/or reading the standards by the learners should occur prior to conducting the activity. Preferably, an exploration of individual values (e.g., values clarification exercises) along with the values of the profession should occur prior to conducting this activity.

Beginning and experienced practitioners, including supervisors, administrators, trainers, and educators, may benefit from discussion of the individual incidents provided. Discussion of the incidents may occur during or after completion of the activity as a follow-up exercise. As indicated in the adaptations section of this article, subsequent activities or variations of the activity can help strengthen accomplishment of the stated learning goals or work toward additional learning goals.

North American Competencies for Professional Child and Youth Work Practitioners

I.B.4.c. Integrate specific principles and standards from the relevant Code of Ethics to specific professional problems.

Group Size

The size of the group will partially depend upon the space available to conduct the activity. There should be a minimum of 3 participants so that at least 3 organizations can be represented. The maximum should probably coincide with the number of ethical statements so that everyone has an opportunity to read at least one of the statements (79 statements are subsequently listed).

Time Required

The activity can be conducted in approximately 30-45 minutes. This will depend upon discussion throughout and after the activity and whether all of the statements are used.

Required Materials

Sheets of paper with the following numbers and statements on each sheet placed should be placed on the floor to represent the yard lines on a U.S. football field: Hall of Shame; 10; 20; 30; 40; 50; 40; 30; 20; 10; Ethical Hall of Fame. Statements representing examples of compliance and non-compliance to each of the five ethical responsibility domains of the Standards of Practice of the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice are placed on index cards.

Physical Setting

There needs to be sufficient space to accommodate the number of participants; approximately 30 feet for the sheets of paper representing the yard lines. There also needs to be sufficient space for the participants to form groups of three teams/organizations in different areas of the room surrounding the "football field" yard line statements.

Procedures

Place the yard line number statements on the floor or taped to a wall where everyone can see the yard numbers. Place the Ethical Hall of Fame statement at one end of the "field" and Hall of Shame statement at the other "End Zone." The field should look like:

Hall of Shame 10 20 30 40 50 40 30 20 10 Hall of Fame

Note: Although the descriptions of incidents on the cards only provide a partial context, cards with a plus sign indicate a more positive/ethical response provided by the author. Individuals may have different interpretations/judgments.

Randomly order the ethical card statements into a pile of cards to be selected by the participants.

Divide the group into 3 teams or “organizations” and ask the teams/organizations to select a participant to represent them on the ethical football field. One way to do this is to have them point to the person in their group that they think would best represent them, on the count of 3. Count to 3 and have them point. Prior to counting, you may want to have the participants listen to the job requirements of their representatives before making this “crucial” decision. Somewhat jokingly tell the groups (while you physical demonstrate) that the representative must have the courage to come on to the field and be able to take small steps forward and backward on the field.

Count to three and ask the persons from each group with the most fingers pointed at them to come on to the ethical football field and stand of the 50 yard line.

Mention to each of the groups that the representatives need the support of all of their team members. Ask them to come nearer to the field as a group in different parts of the room. You might also ask them to think of a cheer as team and after a short amount of time, ask them to demonstrate or practice their cheer out loud before starting the activity.

Start with one of the teams/organizations and ask one of the members to select a card and read the statement out loud in their best child and youth worker voice. After reading the statements ask the groups which way the team representative should move; toward the Hall of Fame or Shame. Ask the participant to move five yards in the direction toward or away from the Ethical Hall of Fame. Ask the participants if they can identify which of the five major responsibility domains are relevant to the statement and attempt to elicit any other thoughts participants may have. Remember that more than one of the responsibility areas may be indicated. Repeat the process with all or a sufficient number of the cards.

As the activity progresses, the representatives may find themselves on different part of the field. Some closer to the Hall of Fame and some closer to the Hall of Shame.

While the participants are still standing in their positions on the field, a number of questions could be asked such as: What steps can an organization take to move closer to the Ethical Hall of Fame? Did any of these examples remind you of situations that you or your organization has encountered? Each statement may elicit questions or comments from the group. You as the activity leader may also prompt discussion throughout by asking questions like “what have you done to protect young persons who have experienced trauma?” when a statement related to trauma is read out loud. A general question such as “what are some other ways a CYW could ethically respond to this situation?” may be helpful at times.

Cautions

Some participants may not feel comfortable reading the statements out loud. You might want to give them the opportunity to ask a teammate to read the statement.

Adaptations

Rather than allow the participants to randomly select all of the cards, you might pre-arrange the cards into groups where the groups end on vastly different places on the field; one group closer to the Hall of Shame and another near or in the Hall of Fame. You might then ask the participants what it would be like working in each of the organizations and what would be their individual ethical responsibilities working in a less ethical organization.

If there is not sufficient space to create the ethical football field, you might consider having participants choose cards and discuss. This could be done in small groups or one large group discussion. You could ask the participants to identify the responsibility domain for each statement and possible alternative ethical choices for the non-compliant cards selected.

Further discussion could be conducted as a follow-up activity after completion of the “football” activity. Discussion could emphasize alternative ways to meet the standards. Discussion could explore individual feelings evoked from the incidents and/or individual learner values that pertain to the incidents. A trainer could help learners differentiate between ethical and other judgments. In addition, a trainer could help learners identify possible ethical dilemmas; when an ethical standard might conflict with another standard or a person’s values. Furthermore, a trainer could help the learners begin to plan for application of ethics learning on-the-job; thus, emphasizing all five aspects of the Brophy-Herb, Stein, & Kostelnik model described earlier. Rehearsing or role-playing possible ways to ethically respond to some of the incidents could help strengthen learning as well as promote transfer of learning.

Conclusion

An important aspect of many standards of practice is that they tend to be general principles that can be applied across a variety of practice situations. However, individuals sometimes have difficulty translating general or abstract principles into specific actions. This activity provides specific examples in a visual and kinesthetic manner to help learners better identify the link between broad ethical standards and explicit behavior. As described above, the activity can be adapted to address a variety of learning goals and is best conducted as part of a more comprehensive approach that addresses each of the five areas of the Brophy-Herb, Stein, & Kostelnik model of ethical training. Although this activity has only been conducted in Ohio, U.S.A., and there has been no comprehensive evaluation, anecdotal responses indicate that ethics learning is enhanced while having fun!

Supportive Materials/Statements

+ CYCW regularly conducts a self-learning/training needs assessment using the North American Competencies for Child and Youth Work. After identifying needed areas of growth, the CYCW makes a plan with supervisor to receive the appropriate training or other learning opportunity.

(Responsibility for self)

CYW attends training on behavioral intervention strategies but fails to implement newly learned information from training with the youth.

(Responsibility for self)

+CYW recognizes that many of the youth s/he is working with have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma. To gain a better understanding of the effects of abuse, neglect and trauma on a young person’s development and the implications for daily interaction and intervention, the CYW reads a special issue of the Journal of Child and Youth Care Work on Trauma-Informed Care.

(Responsibility for self)

+After getting into a power struggle with one of the youth that escalates into a situation where the youth was restrained, a CYW decides to discuss the incident with his/her supervisor to gain a better understanding of the youth’s needs and how to possibly prevent a future power struggle with this young person as well as other youth.

(Responsibility for self)

CYW does not understand the individual needs of several youth who have been diagnosed with behavioral/emotional disorders. The CYW does not ask for help from the supervisor or attempt to participate in training for a better understanding.

(Responsibility for self)

+ While attending a professional conference a CYW recognizes his role as a representative of his agency and the profession of child and youth work. The CYW participates with colleagues from other organizations in social activities after the learning sessions at the conference but chooses not to participate in unprofessional activities such as discussing confidential cases.

(Responsibility for self)

CYW attends a professional conference but after the learning sessions excessively drinks alcoholic beverages and loudly criticizes colleagues and management in front of other colleagues and patrons in the hotel bar.

(Responsibility for self)

+The CYW regularly exercises and eats proper nutrition to help reduce stress overload from work.

(Responsibility for self)

+A CYW recognizes that the stress from work is beginning to impact his/her interactions with youth and colleagues and discusses a stress-reduction plan with the supervisor that includes scheduling vacation time.

(Responsibility for self)

+ The CYW has strong feelings regarding bullies-having been bullied as a youth. Through training and supervision, the CYW tries to understand the reasons why some young people and adults bully others. The CYW also recognizes that it is important to be aware but keep those feelings in check while trying to better relate to and intervene with youth who tend to bully others.

(Responsibility for self)

A CYW who was previously raised in foster and residential care communicates to the youth that s/he successfully completed high school and college. The CYW accepts no excuses nor communicates empathy for youth who are struggling in school.

(Responsibility for self)

+ After several years as a CYW, the CYW reflects upon what s/he has learned since beginning as a novice. The CYW also recognizes his/her leadership role in the team and organization. The CYW begins to think about how s/he might take a future leadership role in the state or profession of child and youth work.

(Responsibility for self)

Although being popular with the youth and other staff, a CYW does not think of himself/herself as a professional or child and youth work as a possible profession. Instead s/he views child and youth work as an enjoyable job to earn money.

(Responsibility for self)

+When designing and leading activities with the youth, the CYW considers how certain activities may be uncomfortable (and even scary) for certain youth. For example, activities that involve physical closeness and touch.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

+When talking with youth about their families, the CYW is careful not to undercut or disempower parents unintentionally. The plan for most of the youth in out-of-home care is to return home. The CYW finds ways to keep families connected and empower parents and youth.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

Not being aware of previous trauma that a youth experienced, the CYW insists that all youth participate in an activity that involves walking blindfolded with another youth.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

While restraining a young person who was fighting another program participant, the CYW verbally reassures the youth that s/he wants the young person to regain control. After the young person regains composure, the CYW helps the young person recognize and accept the strong feelings that were expressed, but also explores with the young person more positive ways to express emotions.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

After being spit on by a youth that was being restrained, the CYW spits on the youth so that s/he knows what it feels like.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

+The CYW speaks up at a county council meeting to advocate for funding for a recreation program that has demonstrated success in supporting school learning and pro-social skills, and is highly attended by youth in the community.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

Even though an afterschool program near a young person's home would have substantial benefit to the young person, the CYW representing the program suggests a less effective program in another community because of the young person's alleged difficulty behavior.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

+The CYW uses the team meeting to lead a discussion regarding how to increase the program's sensitivity to diverse clients of color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, medical condition and physical and developmental abilities.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

The CYW refuses to consider cultural and individual differences when responding to youth and families. The CYW believes that established program rules and routines should apply equally to all.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

+ When a young person who recently immigrated from a country whose customs the CYW was unfamiliar, the CYW meets with his/her supervisor to discuss how the CYW could help the young person feel comfortable/culturally safe and how to best relate with the young person and family. The CYW also asks the young person's parents for suggestions.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

The CYW orients a young person who recently immigrated from another country whose customs the CYW was not familiar with the standardized orientation approach. The CYW does not attempt to learn ways to help the young person feel culturally safe.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

+Although several youth in the program are relatives of another staff member, the CYW provides attention based on their individual needs and not because of their relationship to the staff member.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

With an age difference of only 3 years between the CYW and a program participant, the CYW initiates efforts to establish a romantic relationship with the program participant.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

When asked by a program participant to accompany him/her to a social function because his/her parent needs to attend as a couple, the CYW explains that it is not appropriate for the CYW enter into a personal relationship that extends beyond his/her professional role.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

After participating in various activities at camp that involved physical closeness such as the human knot, one of the program participants later asks to talk with the CYW alone. While alone, the program participant kisses the CYW on the lips. The CYW is surprised but chooses not to clarify roles and responsibilities and maintain professional boundaries.

(Responsibility to children, youth and families)

+ Although disagreeing with a colleague over how to intervene with a young person's misbehavior during a program activity, the CYW waits until s/he can meet with the colleague in the office in private to discuss possible alternative ways to intervene. The CYW acknowledges the colleague's reasoning and positive intentions but also explores with the colleague other ways to intervene with the young person if a similar situation occurs again.

(Responsibility to the employer and/or employing organization)

After disagreeing with a colleague over how to intervene with a young person's misbehavior during a program activity, the CYW ignores the colleague's proposed intervention and criticizes the colleague's competence in the presence of the program participants.

(Responsibility to the employer and/or employing organization)

+ After agreeing with the supervisor to work holidays so that another colleague can spend time with his/her children, the CYW follows through with his/her commitment and competently oversees the holiday program activities for the youth even though the CYW receives unexpected guests for the holidays.

(Responsibility to the employer and/or employing organization)

+The CYW agrees with colleagues and supervisor that s/he will work the night shift. But, after two weeks decides that s/he should not have to work the night shift since s/he has more experience than other team members. The CYW considered complaining in the staff log and reporting off more frequently. But, after thinking about her ethical responsibilities, decided to ask for another meeting with the supervisor to discuss her work schedule.

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After agreeing with the supervisor to work holidays so that another colleague can spend time with his/her children, the CYW feels that s/he working five consecutive holidays is unfair and reports off sick (though not sick) and does not come to work two of the days.

(Responsibility to the employer and/or employing organization)

+ The CYW immediately intervenes and later reports his/her colleague to the supervisor after seeing the colleague inappropriately touch one of the program participants.

(Responsibility to the profession)

After seeing a colleague physically slam a young person to the ground for being disrespectful, the CYW looks the other way and pretends to not have observed the incident.

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(Responsibility to the profession)

A CYW trainer organizes and advertises a training session that will provide 3 hours of continuing education credits on trauma-informed care but instead shows a video on physical indicators of abuse and another video on physical restraint without discussing implications for care or practicing any skills. The CYW finishes the session after 90 minutes.

(Responsibility to the profession)

+A CYW trainer provides youth development and care information at no cost to the general public at a local public library.

(Responsibility to society)

After promoting a two-hour youth development "training" session as a "no cost learning event" for community families, a CYW trainer focuses 90 of the 120 minutes marketing his expensive training materials and attaining individual contact information for further marketing and for-profit promotional events.

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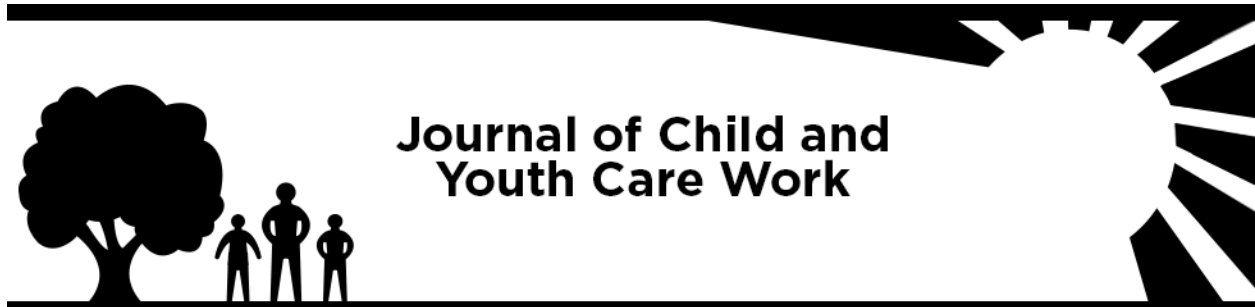
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