

## Handout 1A.4

**ACTIVITY: Ethics Scenario****1. KIRA'S DILEMMA**

Kira is a youth development specialist at XYZ Community Agency; she helps youth prepare for and connect to jobs.

She appreciates youth expressing their gratitude for the important role she plays in their lives, but she has always felt awkward and a little uncomfortable when she receives little “gifts.” She has mentioned her discomfort to various staff. “Don’t worry about it,” “It’s no big deal,” “It’s their way of saying thanks,” “Everybody does it; it’s fine!” are typical responses. Up to now, Kira has graciously accepted “gifts,” just like everyone else.

Early one morning, one of Kira’s youth participants, Angela, comes to her office. “This is for you; thanks for everything you’ve helped me with,” says Angela, thrusting a gift into Kira’s hands. “Open it!” says Angela excitedly. “I’ve got to head off to my internship in a couple of minutes, and I know you don’t want me to be late.”

Kira opens the gift bag and finds a small box with a beautiful set of 14 karat gold earrings inside. A staff member, looking on, is about to say something but closes her mouth, turns and quickly walks away.

**What do you do?**

What is your first reaction? Here are some examples:

- Keep the gift because....
- Return the gift because....
- You’re not sure why Kira feels uncomfortable with “gift giving”....
- The young person is truly grateful and just expressing that....
- You empathize with Kira’s sense of discomfort....
- You don’t understand the problem because you’d return anything over \$25/\$50/\$100....
- Kira must be a particularly good youth worker.

**First**, get a pulse on your own initial reaction. This is the clue that helps you identify which values you

hold most important at the outset. It also tells you which way you are leaning before you have had time to really think things through.

**Second**, attempt to consider the situation from all other perspectives. Some questions may emerge for you.

- How may various participants and staff react to this situation?
- What kind of gift is too much, and why?
- What are the motives and/or presumed expectations for gift giving and gift receiving?
- At what point is a gift “undue influence” in exchange for a special type or quality of service?
- Are there policies to guide staff?
- Am I missing something here? If so, what?

**Now** that you’ve had a chance to think the situation through, move to a more formal process of considering alternatives. Work through some of the major factors in ethical decision-making:

- Stakeholders—who are the people this may affect?
- Possible actions—what are the possible actions that could be taken?
- Consequences—for each possible action, what might happen to each stakeholder?

If your organization has a code of ethics, walk through it step by step and identify what elements you believe are relevant or applicable to this situation. What guidance does your code give on this issue? Are any of your potential actions in conflict with any of the code’s elements? Are there interpersonal dynamics to consider? For example, might there be a conflict between your partnership with a youth participant and your partnership with colleagues?

If your organization does not have a code of ethics, do you think one would help in these kinds of situations? What would you want to see in such

a code? Are there other existing organizational policies or standards that might guide a staff person in these kinds of situations? For example, are there formally stated organizational values or conflict of interest policies?

Once you have all this information, it is time to begin thinking about a decision. If you were Kira, what would you do? What is your best choice and why? How does your decision enable you and your organization to work with youth most effectively?

## Real Life Dilemma

Identify a second issue you, or someone you know, encountered that made you wonder what would be the right thing to do. Follow the same steps you did to consider Kira's hypothetical situation described above. What decision would you make now? Is that how it was handled at the time (if you know)? Are there ways your organization could help you handle these kinds of issues more easily in the future?

### Source

Adapted from Romsa, S. (2001). *Ethics Corner, Kira's Dilemma, Interaction*, 15, 13. Retrieved July 25, 2008, from [http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/ksa/competencies/competency1/ethics\\_scenario-activity.pdf](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/ksa/competencies/competency1/ethics_scenario-activity.pdf) and [http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/pdf/2001summer\\_en.pdf](http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/pdf/2001summer_en.pdf). and [http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/pdf/2001summer\\_en.pdf](http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/pdf/2001summer_en.pdf).

## 2. JASON'S DILEMMA

Jason is an employment specialist at the Acme Career Organization; he helps youth prepare for and connect to jobs.

Jason has been working with Charles, an 18-year-old program participant. When he started the program, Charles disclosed to Jason that he smoked marijuana on a regular basis. Jason made it clear that this would make it difficult for Charles to get a job with any company that required a drug test. Charles said he would consider stopping but to date has not. Charles has worked with Jason over the last few months in developing soft and hard skills that can be applied in the workplace. Through a variety of ongoing activities and short-term assignments, Charles has made excellent progress and has performed outstandingly well in each assignment. Jason believes Charles would be a good match in

skills and interest for a position opportunity being offered by an employer with whom Acme has had a long-standing relationship and a high rate of placement and job retention success. Jason has been hesitant to connect Charles with this employer because of the employer's mandatory drug test.

Yesterday, Charles informed Jason that his girlfriend is pregnant, and that they plan to marry. Charles will be the family's provider, but to do this he needs more than short-term assignments. He would like and believes he is ready for a full-time job. He also tells Jason that, although he still uses marijuana, he knows there are remedies he can use that would clear his system of the drug to allow him to pass a drug test.

## What do you do?

What is your first reaction? Here are some examples:

- Connect Charles to the job opportunity because....
- Do not connect Charles with the job opportunity because....
- Give Charles a break, and connect him with the employer. Marijuana is no big deal. If he can get past the drug test, you feel confident that he will be another successful placement.
- You are glad Charles is accepting his additional familial responsibilities and want to support him, but....
- Marijuana is illegal and a barrier to Charles's employment opportunity. If he really wants the position, he should seek help to quit his drug use.
- It's an easy decision to do what is in Charles's best interest, and that is....

**First**, get a pulse on your own initial reaction. This is the clue that helps you identify which values you hold most important at the outset. It also tells you which way you are leaning before you have had time to really think things through.

**Second**, attempt to consider the situation from all other perspectives. Some questions may emerge for you.

- How may various participants and staff react to this situation?

- What, if any, are the limits of support to provide to a program user? Would providing Charles with this opportunity cross these limits?
- What are the motives behind Charles' drug use and/or presumed reasons for why he will not quit?
- Are there policies to guide staff?
- Am I missing something here? If so, what?

**Now** that you've had a chance to think the situation through, move to a more formal process of considering alternatives. Work through some of the major factors in ethical decision-making:

- Stakeholders—who are the people this may affect?
- Possible actions—what are the possible actions that could be taken?
- Consequences—for each possible action, what might happen to each stakeholder?

If your organization has a code of ethics, walk through it step by step and identify what elements you believe are relevant or applicable to this situation. What guidance does your code give on this issue? Are any of your potential actions in conflict with any of the code's elements? Are there interpersonal dynamics to consider? For example, might there be a conflict between your partnership with a youth participant and your partnership with colleagues?

If your organization does not have a code of ethics, do you think one would help in these kinds of situations? What would you want to see in such a code? Are there other existing organizational policies or standards that might guide a staff person in these kinds of situations? For example, are there formally stated organizational values or conflict of interest policies?

Once you have all this information, it is time to begin thinking about a decision. If you were Jason, what would you do? What is your best choice, and why? How does your decision enable you and your organization to work with youth and employers most effectively?

## Real Life Dilemma

Identify a second issue you, or someone you know, encountered that made you wonder what would be the right thing to do. Follow the same steps you did to consider Jason's hypothetical situation described above. What decision would you make now? Is that how it was handled at the time (if you know)? Are there ways your organization could help you handle these kinds of issues more easily?

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*Jason's Dilemma* authored by Neloms, G. for the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (2009) for use in the Youth Service Professionals Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Training Module.

## 3. TINA'S DILEMMA

Tina is a case manager with the ABC Youth Service Agency; she helps youth prepare for and connect to jobs.

The ABC Youth Service Agency uses gift cards and gift receipts as incentives for the program's youth participants to acknowledge the various milestones the participants have achieved. For example, if a young person has been successfully placed in and remains with a job for 90 days, they receive a gift card worth \$30. Individuals and private donors who support the organization, and in some cases have directly benefited from its services, donated the gift cards. Due to a recent loss of jobs in the community, case managers and program participants are having a difficult time meeting the milestones set by the program and as a result, several of the gift cards have not been distributed.

One day, Tina compliments a co-worker's new outfit. The coworker thanks Tina and tells her the outfit was a real bargain because they used some of the donated gift cards to pay for the purchase. The coworker further surprises Tina when she says, "There's no use in letting them go to waste, and I used them for an outfit that I would only wear to work."

## What do you do?

What is your first reaction? Here are some examples:

- Say and do nothing because....
- Report the coworker to a supervisor because....
- Talk to the coworker and tell them....
- You're not sure why Tina is surprised by the coworker's use of the gift cards.
- You empathize with Tina's sense of surprise.
- The gift cards must have had an expiration date that occurs before they could be awarded to program participants.

**First**, get a pulse on your own initial reaction. This is the clue that helps you identify which values you hold most important at the outset. It also tells you which way you are leaning before you have had time to really think things through.

**Second**, attempt to consider the situation from all other perspectives. Some questions may emerge for you.

- How may various participants and staff react to this situation?
- Is it appropriate to use the gift cards for purposes other than program participant incentives? If so what, and why?
- What are the motives and/or presumed expectations for using the gift cards?
- Are there policies to guide staff?
- Am I missing something here? If so, what?

**Now** that you've had a chance to think the situation through, move to a more formal process of considering alternatives. Work through some of the major factors in ethical decision-making:

- Stakeholders—who are the people this may affect?
- Possible actions—what are the possible actions that could be taken?
- Consequences—for each possible action, what might happen to each stakeholder?

If your organization has a code of ethics, walk through it step by step and identify what elements you believe are relevant or applicable to this situation. What guidance does your code give on this issue? Are any of your potential actions in conflict with any of the code's elements? Are there interpersonal dynamics to consider – for example, might there be a conflict between your partnership with a youth participant and your partnership with colleagues?

If your organization does not have a code of ethics, do you think one would help in these kinds of situations? What would you want to see in such a code? Are there other existing organizational policies or standards that might guide a staff person in these kinds of situations? For example, are there formally stated organizational values or conflict of interest policies?

Once you have all this information, it is time to begin thinking about a decision. If you were Tina, what would you do? What is your best choice, and why? How does your decision enable you and your organization to work with youth most effectively?

## Real Life Dilemma

Identify a second issue you, or someone you know, encountered that made you wonder what would be the right thing to do. Follow the same steps you did to consider Tina's hypothetical situation described above. What decision would you make now? Is that how it was handled at the time (if you know)? Are there ways your organization could help you handle these kinds of issues more easily in the future?

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