

Ethics and Boundaries

Staying in Your Lane — Ethical Case Scenarios

Case Scenario 1: Falsifying Documentation Due to Stress

Situation: A case manager is overwhelmed with a heavy caseload and tight deadlines. In a rush to complete their quarterly progress report documentation, they falsely report that the individual's goals were achieved, even though they were not. The case manager rationalizes this decision by thinking they will address the goals in the next review period.

Ethical Dilemma: Is it ever acceptable to falsify documentation due to stress and time constraints? What are the potential consequences of this action for the individual, the case manager, and the organization?

Case Scenario 2: Breach of Confidentiality

Situation: A case manager is working remotely at a local coffee shop. They receive a phone call from a colleague and begin discussing sensitive details about an individual's case, including their medical history and current treatment plan. Unbeknownst to the case manager, a friend of the individual is sitting at a nearby table and overhears the conversation. This friend comes over to introduce themselves and begins talking about the person and offering their own insights into the situation the case manager was discussing with their colleague.

Ethical Dilemma: How should the case manager handle the situation if they realize that confidential information was inadvertently disclosed? What steps should be taken to prevent such breaches in the future?

Case Scenario 3: Balancing Self-Determination and Professional Paternalism

Situation: An individual with an intellectual disability expresses a strong desire to live independently, despite having significant challenges with daily living skills. The individual's family and support team are concerned about their safety and well-being if they live alone.

Ethical Dilemma: How should the provider balance the individual's right to self-determination with the responsibility to ensure their safety and well-being? What steps should be taken to support the individual's autonomy while addressing the concerns of their family and support team?

Scenario 4: Reporting Workplace Exploitation

Situation: A case manager visits an individual with an intellectual disability and learns that the individual is being exploited at work. The individual reveals that they are not being paid for all the hours they have worked, and their employer is taking advantage of their disability by underpaying them.

Ethical Dilemma: How should the case manager proceed with reporting the suspected exploitation, considering the individual's vulnerability and the potential repercussions for the individual and their employment?