

**Position Paper Related to Ethics in Social Work Practice**  
(points = 2; required length of paper 5-7 pages, double spaced)

The profession of social work has evolved from the efforts of religious institutions and individuals helping the needy to a formalized system where practitioners are educated, trained, held accountable, and licensed. Ethical practices are a critical area of concern in social work practice. Social workers provide services to persons who have been victimized by institutional racism, discrimination and social injustice.

Since the objective of the social work profession is to advocate for and serve disadvantaged persons, it is crucial that no further harm is caused in the process of helping this vulnerable population. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has created a Code of Ethics which defines and governs standards for social work practice.

Summary of Assignment:

1. Choose an ethical dilemma from your agency. If you have not encountered one, get assistance from your Field Instructor in identifying a dilemma.
2. Use the below ethical decision making framework in order to work through the dilemma. It is important to consider who should be involved in this decision-making process. Each step should be outlined as to what you considered and why.
  - a. **Identify** the problem and Identify which ethical dilemma(s) you feel apply and why. - Part of this process is determining that it is an ethical dilemma and consider whether there are legal, personal, and/or professional factors that contribute to the situation.
  - b. **Clarify** the goals of addressing the ethical dilemma. - What are you hoping to achieve both long and short term?
  - c. **Develop** options to resolve the ethical dilemma.
  - d. **Consider** the consequences/harms of each option to all parties involved.
  - e. **Decide** on the option to be utilized in responding to the ethical dilemma.
  - f. **Reflect** on the outcome. - Did you make the right choice? Would you do the same thing again?
  - g. **Debrief** with your Supervisor or Field Instructor.

Refer to the NASW Code of Ethics @ <http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/code/code.asp>

Additional Resource:

Dolgoff, R., & Harrington, D. (2012). *Ethical decisions for social work practice* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.