

**ETHICAL DECISION  
MAKING AND THE 2015  
AAMFT CODE OF ETHICS**

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**AGENDA**

- 2015 AAMFT Code of Ethics overview
- LA Code of Ethics for LMFTs
- Identified Differences Between Codes
- Ethical Decision Making Models
- Ethical Decision Making Exercises

**ETHICS**

- Challenges with ethical conduct can occur when we try to balance mandatory ethics with aspirational ethics
- Mandatory Ethics
  - Considered the must do minimum
- Aspirational Ethics
  - Something to strive towards
  - High standards
  - Explore what is in the best interest of the client

**APPLICABLE TO LMFTS IN LOUISIANA**

**Chapter 29**  
2909. Code of Ethics  
A. The advisory committee has adopted the Code of Ethics of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), including any revisions or additions deemed appropriate or necessary by the board as recommended by advisory committee. AAMFT has given its written permission to use its code of ethics.

**Chapter 47**  
Code of Ethics

**2015 AAMFT CODE OF ETHICS**

- **Nine standards with several codes per standard:**
  - Standard I: Responsibility to Clients
  - Standard II: Confidentiality
  - Standard III: Professional Competence and Integrity
  - Standard IV: Responsibility to Students and Supervisees
  - Standard V: Research and Publication (Formerly Responsibility to Research Participants)
  - Standard VI: Technology-Assisted Professional Services (New Section)
  - Standard VII: Professional Evaluations
  - Standard VIII: Financial Arrangements
  - Standard IX: Advertising

**LOUISIANA CODE OF ETHICS FOR LMFTS**

- 4701: General
- 4703: Resolving Ethical Issues
- 4705: Responsibility to Clients
- 4707: Confidentiality
- 4709: Professional Competence and Integrity
- 4711: Responsibility to Students and Supervisees
- 4713: Responsibility to Research Participants
- 4715: Responsibility to the Profession
- 4717: Financial Arrangements
- 4719: Advertising
  
- Has not changed since 2003

**2015 AAMFT COE VS LA COE FOR LMFTS**

- LA code for LMFTs- 4705. Responsibility to Clients, F. Sexual intimacy with former clients is prohibited for two years after the termination of therapy.
- AAMFT Code 1.5 Sexual Intimacy with Former Client and Others: "Sexual intimacy with former clients or with known members of the client's family system is prohibited".

**2015 AAMFT COE VS LA COE FOR LMFTS**

- LA code for LMFTs- 4705. Responsibility to Clients, G. Addresses the reporting of unethical conduct. The code states that licensees will "comply" with applicable laws. Chapter 39 provides the details regarding disciplinary proceedings.
- AAMFT Code 1.6 Reports of Unethical Conduct also defers members to comply with applicable laws.

### ETHICAL DECISION MAKING MODELS

- Several out there
- Often list steps
- Don't see it as a linear process
- Many consider the principle ethics (what to do) and virtue ethics (what is in the best interest of the client) (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2011, p. 16).

### REMLEY AND HERLIHY (2016)

- Identify and define the problem
- Involve your client in the decision-making process
- Review relevant codes of ethics and the professional literature
- Consider the principles and virtues
- Tune in to your feelings
- Consult with colleagues or experts
- Consider the context
- Identify desired outcomes and consider possible actions to achieve the outcome
- Choose and act on your choice (pp. 16-17)

### COREY, COREY, AND CALLANAN (2011)

- Identify the problem or dilemma
- Identify the potential issues involved
- Review the relevant ethics codes
- Know the applicable laws and regulations
- Obtain consultation
- Consider possible and probable courses of actions
- Enumerate the consequences of various decisions
- Choose what appears to be the best course of action (pp. 24-27)

### HECKER (2015)

- Awareness of potential ethical issue
- Define the ethical problem
- Gather information from all relevant sources
- Define the ethical principles or values that influence your thinking about the problem
- Formulate and weigh all possible alternatives
- Choose the best ethical alternative and implement the decision
- Monitor your decision and the outcome of your decision; reevaluate if necessary (pp. 513-517)

### ETHICAL DECISION MAKING EXERCISES

■ Scenario: Stephanie is a 27 year old Hispanic female who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia. Stephanie lives with her mother and comes to family counseling with her to address complications with consistent medical care. During the meeting, Stephanie admits to smoking marijuana and being released from care from three psychiatrists due to her unwillingness to stop smoking. Her mother explained that the psychiatrists argued about the marijuana contradicting the medications they were given her to help with her symptoms of schizophrenia. Her mother supports Stephanie smoking as it helps Stephanie overall; however, without appropriate medication, Stephanie has begun hallucinating more and her overall health is deteriorating.

### ETHICAL OR LEGAL CONCERNS?

- What, if any, ethical concerns come to mind in the case of Stephanie?
- How would you process an ethical decision making model?
- Get into small groups (3 or 4) and discuss/process.

### ETHICAL DECISION MAKING EXERCISES

■ Scenario: A father and his daughter (Samantha) come to family therapy to help Samantha work through some trauma and grieving. The father meets with you alone and shares that Samantha's mother had shared custody and visitation but that she had physically attacked Samantha. The father further explains that the mother is on probation and has a restraining order from seeing or contacting Samantha. Samantha explains that she is torn about her love for her mother and her anger/disappointment with her mother attacking her. Months pass and Samantha is doing better; however, her mother is now off of probation and you receive a subpoena for records from the mother's lawyer. Samantha's father hears about the subpoena, calls you and explains that Samantha's mother does not have any parental rights according to the last court ruling and therefore does not have access to the records.

### ETHICAL OR LEGAL CONCERNS?

- What, if any, ethical or legal concerns come to mind in the case of Samantha?
- How would you process an ethical or legal decision making model?
- Get into small groups (3 or 4) and discuss/process.

## QUESTIONS?

## REFERENCES

- Corey, G., Gorey, M. S., & Callanan, P. (2011). *Issues and ethics in the helping professions* (8th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.
- Hecker, L.L. (2015). Ethical, legal, and professional issues in marriage and family therapy. In J. L. Wetchler & L. L. Hecker (Eds.), *An introduction to marriage and family therapy* (pp. 505-524). New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Remley, T. P., Jr., & Herlihy, B. (2016). *Ethical, legal, and professional issues in counseling* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.