



Association For Volunteer Administration

# Professional Ethics In the Management of Volunteer Resources

## TRAINING KIT

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ASSOCIATION FOR VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION

The Association for Volunteer Administration, an international professional association, enhances the competence of its members and strengthens the profession of volunteer resources management.

Dear Trainer,

Thank you for using this Ethics Training Kit to strengthen the professionalism of those who work in the field of volunteer resources management.

As you prepare to conduct a workshop, please note the following options for offering the AVA ethics materials to your participants.

- Arrange with the sponsoring organization to purchase a copy of the *Professional Ethics in Volunteer Administration* booklet for all workshop participants. Bulk purchase discounts are available (see order form in Handouts Section). This will enhance the workshop for participants and give them a useful tool to take back to work.

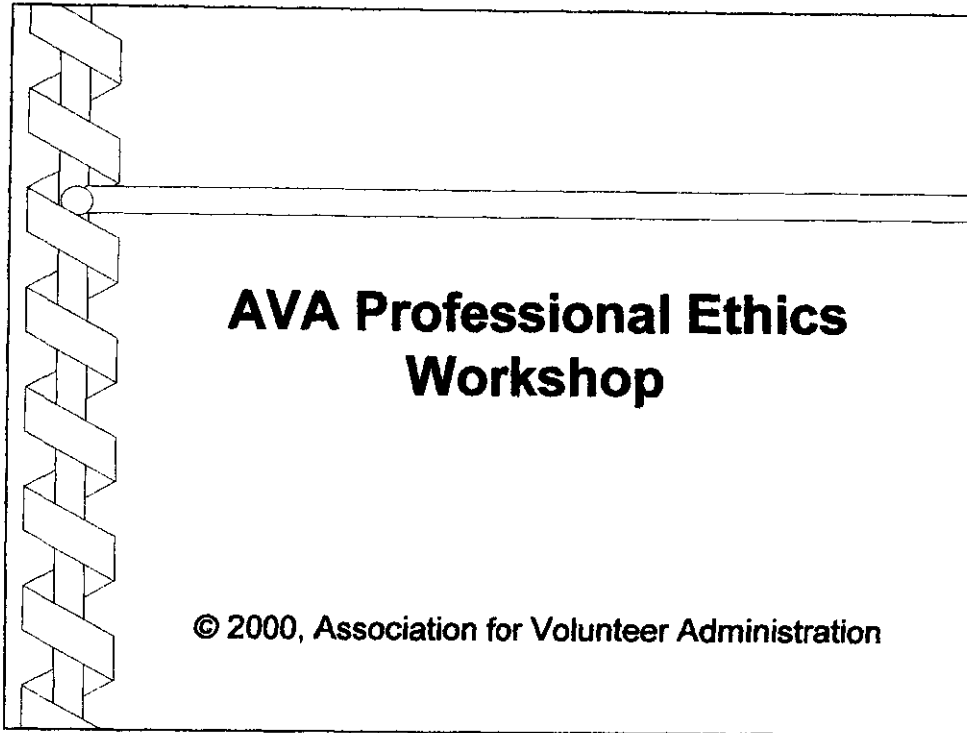
**AND/OR**

- Make copies of the ethics publication and poster order form (see Handouts Section) and give one to all workshop participants. Encourage them to purchase these items to support what they have learned in the workshop.

Again, thank you for sharing your expertise and these resources with others.

Sincerely,

Nancy Gaston, CVA  
Vice President for Professional Development



**Trainer:**

The following presentation was developed to provide a basic grounding to professionals in the field of volunteer administration. The materials provide a consistent approach to explaining the AVA Statement of Professional Ethics but it is your own personal training style and expertise that will make the material come alive.

**We know you will do a great job!**



## What is Ethics?

*Once regarded as a compass, pointing out true good with the inexorable pull of magnetic north, ethics actually work much harder but less precisely-- more like a gyroscope that keeps rebalancing and centering individuals in situations of confusion, conflict and morality. Not a fixed and final point, ethics are instead a journey.*

*Dalla Costa; 1998*

### Trainer:

A key point to make in this slide is the difference between what we once believed - that there is a single true good - and what appears to be more accurate - that what is good depends on the situation.

The Statement is intended to be a tool to help professionals grow an "ethical decision making competency" - a gyroscope to keep them balanced in the many different situations that they may find themselves in.

A new idea within the Statement is that professionals can develop a new competency by using the Statement as a tool to help them make better, more ethical, decisions.



## Who is Ethical?

Thinking of the profession of volunteer resources management, please complete the following sentence:

*To me, an ethical professional is someone who...*

### Trainer:

Plan about 10-12 minutes for this activity. Give about 2-3 minutes for each individual to complete the sentence. Then form the participants into small groups of 3-5 and have each person provide their response to the others in their group. Come together as a large group and ask the participants for some responses. Record these on a flip chart and post.

The posted responses will likely have a great deal in common with the core ethical values and principles and it is a nice link to come back to this flip chart.

A key point to make is that we all come to the table with some understanding of what being ethical means. We will draw and build on that knowledge during the workshop.

## Perceiving Ethical Behavior

	Completely Agree			Completely Disagree	
I am ethical	1	2	3	4	5
My good friends are ethical	1	2	3	4	5
My co-workers are ethical	1	2	3	4	5
The non-profit sector is ethical	1	2	3	4	5
The business sector is ethical	1	2	3	4	5
Government is ethical	1	2	3	4	5

### Trainer:

Do this activity as an individual activity e.g., responses will not be shared. Read out each statement and ask participants to circle the point on the scale which represents their opinion.

An important starting point for understanding professional ethics and ethical decision making is how each individual views the ethical behavior of those around them.

The next slide shows the typical trend.

## Perceiving Ethical Behavior

	Completely Agree			Completely Disagree	
	1	2	3	4	5
I am ethical		2	3	4	5
My good friends are ethical	1	2	3	4	5
My co-workers are ethical	1	2	3	4	5
The non-profit sector is ethical	1	2	3	4	5
The business sector is ethical	1	2	3	4	5
Government is ethical	1	2	3	4	5

### Trainer:

The yellow line shows the typical trend - that is the farther that one gets from what one knows and is comfortable with, the more we question their ethics, e.g., if our friend steals a car and we know this friend to be a good person, we are more likely to give them the benefit of the doubt as to their reason for stealing the car. Asking the group why this is a common trend usually draws this point out.

### Key concepts here include:

- We are more likely to make rapid judgements or leap to conclusions when we are unfamiliar with the person or organization taking the action
- When we are unfamiliar with a person or a group we need to collect more information about why they took the action they did.
- A rational reflective decision making process, like AVA's will help prevent us from making judgements too quickly.



## Going Beyond Codes of Ethics

*Just having a code of ethics does not necessarily represent an awareness on the part of the organization of how ethical concerns arise for its employees...*

*...nor is it an effective commitment by the organization to finding ways that allow employees to act with integrity and to solve ethically complex situations.*

Adapted from Toffler, 1991

### Trainer:

This quote goes to the heart of why AVA developed its Statement as an ethical decision making tool. Too often codes of ethics do not help people act with integrity and do not provide guidance to solve an ethical dilemma. AVA's Statement does help its members act with integrity and does provide a simple, rational decision making process, based on core ethical values.





## **“Top Line” Thinking Behind the Statement of Professional Ethics**

- AVA supports the growth of an ethical decision making competency in its members
- AVA wants to engage members in deciding what the highest standards of ethical professional practice are
- AVA sees its members as principled leaders in their community and their organization

### **Trainer:**

These points outline some of the core beliefs behind the Statement.

AVA is taking a “top line” (growth, engagement, leadership) versus “bottom line” (rules, policing, punishment) approach in designing the Statement with its members.

AVA is a professional association that sets standards for professional practice. AVA also guides and coaches members to enhance competency.

## Personal Values Selection

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure             | <input type="checkbox"/> Power           | <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of Humor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics            | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring          | <input type="checkbox"/> Conquest       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wealth                | <input type="checkbox"/> Kindness        | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mastery               | <input type="checkbox"/> Compassion      | <input type="checkbox"/> Diligence      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respect               | <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy         | <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Determination    | <input type="checkbox"/> Luxury          | <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courtesy/Civility     | <input type="checkbox"/> Pleasure        | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-restraint |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptance            | <input type="checkbox"/> Truthfulness    | <input type="checkbox"/> Attractiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Risk Taking           | <input type="checkbox"/> Sincerity       | <input type="checkbox"/> Justice        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Variety               | <input type="checkbox"/> Candor          | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Timeliness            | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity       | <input type="checkbox"/> Impartiality   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship           | <input type="checkbox"/> Promise Keeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Equity         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Philanthropy          | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyalty         | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Voting                | <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty         | <input type="checkbox"/> Expression     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Responsibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Tradition       | <input type="checkbox"/> Competition    |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Professionalism |   |

### Trainer:

This slide should be prepared as a separate handout for participants (see the Handouts Section of this trainer's package).

A big question for most when we start to talk about values - on our way to talking about ethics - is: WHO's values we will use?

This activity starts the process of showing that a consensus set of values can be determined. These will eventually form our 6 core ethical values.

Give participants 3-5 minutes to put a check mark by all values that are important to them personally. If people do not understand a term, encourage them to ask but not to get too bogged down on definitions.

After they have done that, the next step is to have them pick their 6 most important values from those they have already selected. They can circle these.

## Personal Values Selection

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure             | <input type="checkbox"/> Power           | <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of Humor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics            | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring          | <input type="checkbox"/> Conquest       |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Determination    | <input type="checkbox"/> Luxury          | <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement    |
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|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Professionalism |   |

Trainer:

After everyone has chosen their top 6 values, put this slide on the screen.

As a large group activity, ask by show of hands, how many had one of their 6 most important values in the first block of highlighted values. Wait. Then proceed from highlighted block to block, reading the terms and requesting a show of hands. The most commonly selected set are those in the "caring" block - the least are in the "citizenship" block.

Key concepts are:

- That most people will have at least one of 6 most important values within one of the highlighted groups. This means that we can use these six as a starting point for a values discussion (or specifically, an ethics discussion)
- It is this consensus approach - that most people agree most of the time (not everyone all of the time) - that is important because it gives us some common language to begin to address ethical issues



## Core Ethical Values

- Citizenship
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Justice and Fairness
- Caring
- Trustworthiness

Josephson Institute for Ethics, 1993

### Trainer:

These are the six core ethical values that were created by the Josephson Institute for Ethics, and used within the AVA Statement. Each of these terms represents one of the highlighted blocks on the previous slide. These will be discussed one at a time in following slides. The principles that define each core ethical value will be covered on those slides.

Show the 10 minute video of Michael Josephson discussing these core ethical values (he calls them the 6 Pillars of Character).

As a large group discuss what they have heard.

### Some points to consider:

- Ethics is a system of rules or principles for behavior within a group or society according to which actions can be judged. The six core ethical values establish the broad framework for the behaviors expected of professionals in the field particularly in terms of their relationship to volunteers, clients, staff, the community, and the profession.
- Some participants may wonder why faith is not a core ethical value. The rationale is that as a group of professional practitioners we may be of many faiths and it is not, therefore, one of the values by which actions will be judged.

## Principles of Citizenship & Philanthropy

- **Philosophy of volunteerism** - development of a personal and coherent philosophy as a foundation for working with others in developing volunteer programs
- **Citizenship** - creating a climate through which human needs can be met and human values enhanced.

### Trainer:

The next series of slides describe how AVA defines each of the core ethical values in the **full AVA Statement of Professional Ethics**.

For each of the following slides, the bullet points represent the ethical principles that make up the core ethical value.

While each of the following slides should be reviewed, the time spent on these slides can vary depending upon the experience of the group.

### Some key points:

- Since 1995, AVA has taken the Statement back to its membership to ensure that its core ethical values and principles are understood and relevant. This review process has confirmed that practicing professionals support these core ethical values and principles.
- Any member at any time can become part of the ethics review process by submitting comments or questions to AVA.
- These core ethical values and principles are central to the AVA certification process.



## Principles of Responsibility 1

- **Accountability** - develop a volunteer program that will enhance and extend the work of the organization's paid staff
- **Pursuit of Excellence** - contribute to the credibility of the profession in the eyes of those it serves; be reliable, careful, prepared and well informed; pursue excellence even when resources are limited; overcome obstacles to excellence. Improve knowledge, skills, and ability to make judgements



## Principles of Responsibility 2

- **Self-restraint** - commit to reflective decision making with the intent of advancing the long term greater good



## Principle of Caring

- **Caring** - be kind, compassionate and generous in all actions so as to minimize the harm done to others in the performance of one's duties





## Principles of Justice and Fairness

- **Procedural Fairness** - have an open and impartial process for collecting and evaluating information critical for making decisions
- **Impartiality** - have impartial and objective standards that avoid discriminatory or prejudicial behaviors
- **Equity** - treat all individuals with whom s/he works equitable



## Principle of Trustworthiness 1

- **Truthfulness** - commit to the truth and assure that all interactions with volunteers and other paid staff are founded on the premise of open and honest communication
- **Sincerity/Non-deception** - treat volunteers with sincerity, never operate in a deceptive manner, continually promote this principle throughout the organization
- **Candor** - commit to fairness and forthrightness



## Principle of Trustworthiness 2

- **Integrity** - understand and work to promote the core ethical values; base his/her actions on core ethical values and not compromise those values for convenience.



## Principle of Trustworthiness 3

- **Promise-keeping** - accept responsibility to assure that all mutual contracts or agreements are clearly understood and agreed upon; be reasonable, realistic and professional in determining the appropriateness of expectations or requests; assure clear communication regarding commitments made on behalf of the organization, staff, or volunteers



## Principle of Trustworthiness 4

- **Promise-keeping con't** - understand the importance of confidentiality and work to protect confidential information
- **Loyalty** - understand the limits to his/her loyalty to volunteers, clients, and the organization; recognize s/he has loyalties to the organization, its staff, volunteers, and to personal relationships and understand how to prioritize those loyalties



## Principle of Trustworthiness 5

- **Avoiding Conflicts of Interest - understand what a conflict of interest is and know how to address it appropriately**

## Program Outcomes

• **Basing your management practices on the core ethical values will result in a volunteer program that:**

- ✓ is accessible to diverse groups
- ✓ operates ethically
- ✓ strives for excellence
- ✓ maintains the public trust
- ✓ sustains a helping environment
- ✓ is at a lower risk for legal actions against it

AVA Statement of Professional Ethics

### Trainer:

These outcomes may be different from the performance outcomes some volunteer administrators are familiar with, e.g., numbers of volunteers, an operating record keeping system, recognition events, etc.

The purpose of the Statement is "big picture" - to encourage the professional practitioner to view their program in terms of broader criteria.

An interesting discussion can result by asking how each of these outcomes could result from basing management practices on core ethical values. It is a good review of the previous slides. For example, within the core ethical value of **RESPONSIBILITY**, AVA clearly states that it expects members to engage in the pursuit of excellence by

- accepting professional responsibility
- being diligent
- doing one's best
- persevering, and
- continuous improvement.



## Personal Ethics?

*If we conclude that ethics is purely a personal matter, and that each person's private code of values is entitled to equal respect regardless of the content of their beliefs, there is not legitimate basis for distinguishing between Saddam Hussein and Mother Teresa-- they both live up to their own standards.*

Michael Josephson; 1992

### Trainer:

This slide may be contentious in that it stresses that ethics are not personal - your ethics, my ethics, etc.

Recall that **ethics is a system of rules or principles for behavior within a group or society according to which actions can be judged**. We would be unable to judge something as good or bad if ethics were just personal.

What this means to practicing professionals is that they are accountable to their profession to demonstrate through their actions, the core ethical values and principles. For example, the core ethical value of **RESPONSIBILITY** establishes the principle that professional volunteer administrators need to continuously improve their skill sets by attending professional development opportunities. Another example, the core ethical value of **JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS**, establishes the principle that professional volunteer administrators have open and impartial systems for collecting information critical for making decisions.

The next slide continues this thought.






## Professional Ethics are NOT Personal

- Professionals accept a common set of professional standards when it comes to ethical practice
- Without a common set of standards, there is no profession - everyone does what they want

**Trainer:**

See notes on the previous slide.

## Ethical Decision Making Model

- 
- **Step 1** Identify the primary stakeholders  
↓
  - **Step 2** Restate the problem in terms of a core ethical value for each stakeholder  
↓
  - **Step 3** Generate a list of possible courses of action  
↓
  - **Step 4** Decide on the most ethical course of action

Meneghetti & Seel (1998)

### Trainer:

This outlines the 4-step ethical decision making process used in the Statement. It is consistent with most decision making models. Walk participants through the model. Use Handout 7 to demonstrate the process.

For example:

- Using one of the case studies, have small groups of workshop participants list the stakeholders within the case - stakeholders are any of those people or organizations that may be affected by the decision that will be made.
- Because the list of stakeholders may be rather long, for this activity have participants select their "top 3" stakeholders - those most affected by the decision that will be made. Those stakeholders not selected during this exercise, may need to be addressed if the situation were real.
- Begin using Handout 8. For each of their three stakeholders, ask participants to select the core ethical value (or if they can be more specific, select the principle) that is at issue, e.g., RESPONSIBILITY is at issue if the organization is putting client care at risk.
- For each stakeholder on Handout 8, have participants "test fly" three actions they could take. Balance the positive and negative consequences and make the decision that produces the most positive benefits and least negative consequences.

# Ethical Decision Making Process Worksheet

STAKEHOLDER	CORE ETHICAL VALUE OR PRINCIPLE	ACTION	POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES	NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES
-------------	---------------------------------------	--------	--------------------------	--------------------------

**Trainer:**

This should be available to participants as a separate handout. (See the Handouts Section of your Trainer's Package).

The idea of this worksheet is to support the 4-step process on the previous slide, by providing a structured way of collecting and reviewing information regarding the ethical dilemma. Some points:

- One stakeholder that must always be considered is the client group identified in the mission statement of the participant's organization. Remember - each of us works to achieve the mission of our organization and therefore we cannot ignore our key client group when making ethical decisions.
- If there appears to be more than one core ethical value at issue for a particular stakeholder, put that stakeholder down twice on the chart with only one of the core ethical values beside each.
- Some people, in using this sheet, may want to start with the core ethical value first and then identify the stakeholders. This works but for first time users, encourage them to start with stakeholders first.
- Let participants know that this process creates a balance sheet of positive and negative outcomes from which we can make our decision - namely creating more positive outcomes than negatives.



## An Ethical Perspective

*“An ethical person often chooses to do more than the law requires and less than the law allows... there is a big difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do.”*

Justice Potter Stewart

**Trainer:**

This slide is intended to remind participants that law and ethics are not the same thing.

Often people equate being ethical with living according to the law. This is not so. What may be legal may be unethical in a certain circumstance. Conversely, what is illegal may be ethical.

By developing an ethical decision making competency through practicing with the Statement, professional practitioners will grow a sensitivity to this distinction.

Some other thoughts:

- “Whistle-blowers” (such as with Dow’s breast implants, the tobacco companies, the Dalcon shield etc.) broke the law by divulging information in violation to their employment contracts. They did the ethical thing by stopping injuries to countless people.
- In the light of cutbacks in many social service providers, volunteers are being looked at as replacements for staff. What do participants think of this issue in light of Justice Potter Stewart’s comment?



## Evaluating Your Decision

- Is it right?
- Is it fair?
- Who gets hurt?
- Would you be comfortable if the details were reported on the front page of the newspaper?
- How does it smell?
- What would you tell a child to do?

Josephson Institute for Ethics & Centre for Business Ethics at Bentley College

### Trainer:

While there may be more formal assessment criteria, most ethical decisions carry a great deal of "gut level" feeling.

The Centre for Business Ethics at Bentley College recognizes this by putting forward some quick questions participants can ask themselves once they have settled on a decision.



## Concluding Thought

**Never suppose that in any possible situation or under any circumstances that it is best for you to do a dishonorable thing however slightly so it may appear to you...**

**Encourage all your virtuous dispositions, and exercise them whenever an opportunity arises, being assured that they will gain strength by exercise... and that exercise will make them habitual.**

Thomas Jefferson

### Trainer:

The following "Concluding Thought" slides are intended to give you a choice of quotes to end your presentation. Of course, you may have your own favorites to use.

A great source of quotes is at:  
<http://www.josephsoninstitute.org/quotes/allquotes.doc>. This is a 60-page Word document that you can download for your files.



## Concluding Thought

**Truth must be the foundation stone,  
the cement to solidify the entire  
social edifice.**

Pope John Paul II



## Concluding Thought

**The character ethic, which I believe to be the foundation of success, teaches that there are basic principles of effective living, and that people can only experience true success and enduring happiness as they learn and integrate these principles into their basic character.**

Steven Covey





## Concluding Thought

**Like the body that is made up of different limbs and organs, all moral creatures must depend on each other to exist.**

Hindu proverb

# **HANDOUTS**

## **AVA Professional Ethics Trainer Kit**

December 2000



**From the perspective of professional manager of volunteers, how would you complete the following sentence**

To me, an ethical person is someone who...



## Personal Perspectives on Ethical Behavior

An important starting point in learning about ethical decision making is our own personal perspective on what stands for ethical behavior. This exercise is one way of exploring how you personally view the ethical behavior of others around you.

**Circle one rating for each statement.**

	Completely agree		Completely disagree		
<b>I am ethical</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>My good friends are ethical</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>My co-workers are ethical</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>The non-profit sector is ethical</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>The business sector is ethical</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Government is ethical</b>	1	2	3	4	5

Thoughts or Comments:

## The Cost of Risk

When risk can affect an organization's bottom line and earning potential, it becomes an issue of corporate governance for managers and directors. While the following chart shows the average loss experience per incident suffered by corporations, experience indicates that many larger losses go unreported. Figures in Canadian dollars.

Unnecessary purchases	\$ 60,000	Kickbacks	\$178,000
Phantom vendors	\$ 73,000	Information theft	\$213,000
Extortion	\$ 46,000		

Source: KPMG Survey, 1998

## Signs of the Vulnerable Organization

1. Weak, or unmonitored, internal controls and understaffed accounting departments.
2. Management compensation strongly linked to short-term financial results.
3. Infighting among top management.
4. The company or a department dominated by one or two managers.
5. Poorly paid and poorly managed employees.
6. A high level of complaints against the organization from customers, suppliers or regulatory authorities.

KPMG, 1998

# VALUES SORT

- Adventure
- Aesthetics
- Wealth
- Mastery
- Respect
- Self-Determination
- Courtesy/Civility
- Acceptance
- Risk Taking
- Variety
- Timeliness
- Citizenship
- Philanthropy
- Voting
- Social  
Responsibility

- Power
- Caring
- Kindness
- Compassion
- Empathy
- Luxury
- Pleasure
- Truthfulness
- Sincerity
- Candor
- Integrity
- Promise Keeping
- Loyalty
- Honesty
- Tradition
- Professionalism

- Sense of Humor
- Conquest
- Responsibility
- Diligence
- Continuous  
Improvement
- Self-restraint
- Attractiveness
- Justice
- Fairness
- Impartiality
- Equity
- Creative Expression
- Competition

## CORE ETHICAL VALUES and PRINCIPLES

<b>CORE ETHICAL VALUE</b>	<b>SUPPORTING ETHICAL PRINCIPAL</b>
<b>Trustworthiness</b>	truthfulness, sincerity, candor, integrity, promise keeping, loyalty, honesty
<b>Respect</b>	respect, autonomy, courtesy
<b>Responsibility</b>	responsibility, diligence, continuous improvement, self-restraint
<b>Justice and Fairness</b>	justice, fairness, impartiality, equity
<b>Caring</b>	caring, kindness, compassion
<b>Citizenship</b>	citizenship, philanthropy, voting

Josephson Institute of Ethics (1993)

## Four Step Ethical Decision Making Model

**Step 1:** Identify the primary stakeholders in this situation, based on the mission of your organization and its primary clients.

**Step 2:** State the problem, identifying the key ethical values being violated for each stakeholder.

**Step 3:** Generate a list of possible courses of action, always including the option of doing nothing at all.

**Step 4:** Decide on the most ethical course of action by:

- Considering the interests of all stakeholders.
- Choosing a course of action based on core ethical values rather than those based on non-ethical values.
- Only violating a core ethical value if it is *clearly necessary* in order to advance another core ethical value that will produce the greatest balance of good in the long run.

Meneghetti & Seel (1998)



# ETHICAL DECISION MAKING MODEL

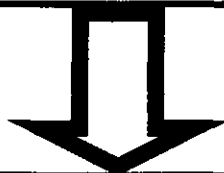
## Process Example

STAKEHOLDER	CORE ETHICAL VALUE OR PRINCIPLE	ACTION	POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES	NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES
-------------	---------------------------------	--------	-----------------------	-----------------------

<b>1. Clients</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	Do nothing	None	Clients get hurt
		Intervene	Stop harmful acts	None
		Retrain	Long term prevention	None

<b>2. Clients</b>	<b>Caring</b>	Do nothing	None	Clients get hurt
		Talk with client	Builds relationship	None
		Change policy	Stops harmful acts	None

<b>3.</b>				



**Weigh positive and negative consequences and select the actions that reduce harm and produce the greatest good in the long term**



**Make your decision including a statement of core ethical values, principles and stakeholders**



## **EVALUATING YOUR DECISION**

It is important to review your decision. You should go back and review the AVA Statement of Professional Ethics to ensure that you have addressed issues of professional practice. You may also want to consider the following questions when you review your decision.

- Is it right?
- Is it fair?
- Who gets hurt?
- Would you be comfortable if the details were reported on the front page of your local newspaper?
- What would you tell your child to do?
- How does it smell?

Bentley College, The Centre for Business Ethics

**Q:** How would you evaluate your decision based on these criteria?

# Order Form



**Professional Ethics in Volunteer Administration**

Written in an easy-to-apply format with instructions on how and when to use this guide, core values charts with corresponding ethical principles, and program components. Includes a worksheet to assist in assessing ethical dilemmas. Helpful tool for anyone who faces challenges in a variety of situations involving volunteers. Valuable supplement to volunteer administration coursework.

Publisher: Association for Volunteer Administration  
 15-page booklet; 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1999  
 \$7.00 US AVA members  
 \$10.00 US Non-members

**Professional Ethics Poster**

A code of ethics is like a badge of honor! Display yours in a space-saving 8-inch by 11-inch poster format (21 cm by 28 cm). Framed in acrylic. Can be mounted with magnet or Velcro.

\$10.50 US AVA members  
 \$15.00 US Non-members

**How To Order**

**AVA members save 30%!**  
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# **CASE STUDIES**

## **AVA Professional Ethics Trainer Kit**

December 2000



# Introduction

The following case studies are offered to give trainers and workshop participants a range of different scenarios to consider. As is the case with most ethical dilemmas, there is never a single right answer that applies in all situations.

As each participant engages the case study, they bring their own experience and their own sense of context for the case. This can make group discussions difficult, particularly if participants have little in common. To help the group process, participants should be encouraged to make whatever assumptions they need to make a decision.

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## **Case Study 1**

### **Balancing Staff and Volunteer Needs**

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You are the Director of Volunteers at a fairly large residential facility for seniors. You have been working to establish your volunteer program and have been quite successful in having staff and volunteers work together.

Early one morning one of the staff comes into your office and says, "I am really concerned about the volunteer you have me working with. I think she is too involved with some of our clients. There is something about her that I just do not trust. I do not have any proof yet but I think she is accepting gifts of money and jewelry from some of our seniors. I would like you to remove her and get me another volunteer."

What is your best course of action?

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## **Case Study 2**

### **Balancing Roles and Responsibilities**

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You are the Manager of Volunteer Resources of a museum in a large urban center. With the exception of managerial level employees, your museum staff is unionized state/provincial employees.

You were hired to assess the need for a volunteer program and then to develop and implement a volunteer program for the museum. You found that there was a need for volunteers and have developed and implemented a volunteer program. Both staff and managers feel that the program is adding real value to the museum and to the experience of visitors.

Unfortunately, negotiations between the government and the union have broken off. The staff has served strike notice and are prepared to walk off the job tomorrow. The senior management team calls you into a meeting to discuss the possibility of having volunteers fill staff roles should the strike become a reality. They ask you directly to call your volunteers and discuss filling in for striking staff.

What is your response to the request and why?

Would your response be different if the organization was a hospital (instead of a museum) and one of your family members was a patient?



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## **Case Study 3**

### **Disclosure of Confidential Information**

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You have been successfully running a volunteer program for a small rural counseling agency for three years. You have learned that the community is tightly knit and that everybody seems to know what everyone else is doing. You smile when you remember that one of your volunteers expressed concern about the “Jenkins” because Mrs. Jenkins was not seen shopping at the local supermarket on Monday as she, and the other ladies, usually do. “I wonder what happened,” she asked, “I’ll have to call Ellen and see if she knows.”

As you are thinking about this, a young man knocks and walks into your office. “Do you have a moment,” he asks, “I need to talk to you about something.” You let him in and let him know that you have just a few minutes before your next appointment.

The young man begins by telling you how much he has enjoyed his volunteer role over the past 18 months. He then pauses and says, “I’m not sure how long I can continue coming in though.” You ask why and he replies, “I have been tested HIV positive.” He asks you to keep this information confidential. He also tells you how much he fears the information “getting around” the community. “I don’t know what people would do to me here,” he says.

You respect his request for confidentiality but also know that some precautions need to be taken to protect the people. As a professional manager of volunteers, what is your best course of action?

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## **Case Study 4**

### **Civic Engagement**

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You are a consultant who specializes in volunteer management. You have had years of experience as a professional manager in a variety of positions in a number of different agencies.

You have just accepted a contract with a municipality close to a major city to improve citizen involvement in the community. The municipality has told you that:

- They just completed a 12-month review of citizen involvement and found that less than 5% of residents volunteer in the community
- Nearly 80% of the residents commute to the city to work and that of those, almost 40% volunteer in the city. Of those who volunteer, most do so at their children's school or daycare, also located in the city
- Major demographics of the community are: most families have an annual gross income of over \$55,000, most people are between 29 and 49 years old, most have at least one child, most have college or university-level education, and most report having high or very high expectations of community services
- The community cannot afford more staff for its hospital, school, seniors facility, or approximately 20 other social services
- The municipality believes that encouraging volunteer involvement will dramatically improve the services offered to residents in the community

You have a week to prepare a presentation to outline your ideas to the municipal government and other key stakeholders. As an experienced professional manager of volunteers, what will you propose and address with this group?

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## **Case Study 5**

### **Encouraging Autonomy**

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You have been hired as the first professional manager of volunteers for The Alpha Society. Alpha is an organization that has nearly 25 years of history providing a range of services to the community including career counseling, job placement, low income housing location, and advocacy for the unemployed.

Over the first month on the job you discover a number of things:

- There are about 80 volunteers that have been “helping out.” Many of these volunteers received services from Alpha in the past and have returned to help others
- Many volunteers tell you that they do whatever the staff says need to be done. Some tell you that when they come in there is nothing for them to do so they go back home.
- There are no policies, records, or job descriptions for volunteers. As volunteers came forward, Alpha staff gave them work to do – everything from stuffing envelopes to giving career information and counseling
- Staff like volunteers but see them as a way of off-loading work and tasks they either do not want to do or do not have time to do
- The Board and senior management want more volunteers because they cannot afford more staff although the demand for services is increasing. “Volunteers are free,” says the Executive Director.

What do you see as the key ethical issues? What would you plan to do?

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## **Case Study 6**

### **Peer Support**

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You have been an active member of your local professional association for managers of volunteers for 4 years. You have earned your professional credential – the CVA (Certified in Volunteer Administration).

Today is your association's meeting. You arrive and a colleague comes forward, clearly wanting to talk to you. You know this person to be someone who has been in the field of volunteer management for about 4 years. This person has made comments to you in the past about their frustration of not moving ahead in their career. You have the sense that this person really does not want to manage volunteers and that they may be taking some shortcuts in their volunteer program.

“Good morning,” you say, “how are things?”

“I don’t know,” this person says, “I’m finding all of this a waste of time. Nobody really cares about volunteers in our agency. I don’t know what I’m supposed to do. I mean volunteers are really just free labor. I think our agency should drop the volunteer program and figure out a way of hiring more paid staff.”

After sighing, this person asks you, “Why do you bother?”

As a professional manager of volunteers, what would you do immediately? In the next 6 months? In the next year?

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## **Case Study 7**

### **Management Accountabilities**

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You are the Director of Human and Voluntary Resources in a large senior's facility that provides residential, independent living, and hospice services. In addition, your facility is known for its advocacy efforts on behalf of seniors and broader community development and governance issues. You manage a professional staff of two human resource officers and one manager of volunteers. There are roughly 220 staff employed in the facility and a core of 150 volunteers. Another 100 volunteers help with various episodic and special events. The facility directly serves nearly 2,500 seniors and their families each year.

The board of your facility believes that there will be a major budget shortfall this fiscal year because of higher than expected staffing costs and lower than anticipated fees for services. The board has asked your CEO to explore options to either increase revenues or decrease costs... or both.

At a senior management meeting, the discussion turns to using more volunteers and placing them in what have been up to now, staff positions. Some directors suggest that the risks associated with doing this can be mitigated if volunteer training is improved and a more extensive insurance policy is purchased. Others suggest that instead of incurring the insurance costs, a more extensive waiver could be presented to new clients thereby reducing the expectation of receiving care from professional nursing or other staff.

Projections show that the facility has a good chance of remaining solvent and able to provide services if volunteers are used more extensively in service delivery. One director feels strongly that the facility has an obligation to staff and clients that would be jeopardized if volunteers were used in this way. Two directors feel that the crux of the issue is financial and decisions should be driven by the bottom-line. Another director however feels that the greater good is being served if the facility remains solvent – issue is accomplished – to provide services to seniors and jobs to employees. The CEO ends the discussion by asking you to come back with an action plan.

From the perspective of a professional manager of volunteers, what would you propose to address all the stakeholder needs, including the facility itself?

# Trainer Ideas

While each case will be viewed differently by different people, some ideas for discussion are provided below for each case.

## Case 1

- Core ethical value to consider: RESPONSIBILITY (see the principles of staff relationships and self-restraint).
- A good first step in this case is collecting more information from the key stakeholders: the volunteer, the staff member, and clients.

## Case 2

- Core ethical values to consider: RESPECT (see the principle of mutuality), RESPONSIBILITY (see the principles of staff relationships and self-restraint), JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS (see the principle of impartiality), TRUSTWORTHINESS (see the principles of integrity, promise-keeping, loyalty, and avoiding conflicts of interest)
- An interesting point of exploration is the meaning to staff, volunteers, and the community of the collective agreement signed by the union and the museum.

## Case 3

- Core ethical values to consider: RESPECT (see the principles of self-determination and privacy), CARING, TRUSTWORTHINESS (see the principle of loyalty)
- This case is set up to create the rumor-mill that often exists in small communities as well as many organizations. It is also set up to create the sense of tension around protecting the rights of an individual and protecting the safety of those working in the organization.

## Case 4

- Core ethical values to consider: CITIZENSHIP AND PHILANTHROPY (see the principles of philosophy of volunteerism and social responsibility), RESPECT (see the principle of mutuality), TRUSTWORTHINESS (see the principles of reasonability of commitments, clarity of commitments, and avoiding conflicts of interest)
- This case is focussed on how our profession can help mobilize communities through voluntary action. The challenge is that communities may expect more than can be realistically delivered within a short time frame.

## Case 5

- Core ethical values to consider: ALL
- This case cuts to issues that are at the core of our profession – how do you set up a volunteer program that meets high standards of quality in an organization that does not really value the true worth of volunteers. Having participants explore and prioritize their options provides a lively discussion.

### **Case 6**

- Core ethical values to consider: CITIZENSHIP AND PHILANTHROPY (see the principles of philosophy of volunteerism and social responsibility), RESPONSIBILITY (see the principle of professional responsibility), CARING (see the principle of compassion and generosity), TRUSTWORTHINESS (see the principle of candor)
- It may happen that each professional is put in the position to counsel a peer. This can be an opportunity to help an individual become better at what they do. It is also an opportunity to help build the profession.

### **Case 7**

- Core ethical values to consider: CITIZENSHIP AND PHILANTHROPY (see the principles of philosophy of volunteerism and social responsibility), RESPECT (see the principle of mutuality), RESPONSIBILITY (see the principles of staff relationships, professional responsibility, doing one's best, self-disclosure and self-restraint), TRUSTWORTHINESS (see the principles of candor, moral courage, reasonability of commitments, clarity of commitments, limitations to loyalty, and prioritizing loyalties)