



# Houston, We Have a Dilemma, Ethics as a Part-Time Field Student

By Aubree Sepler

You're in field, and you witness something that the new employee training manual or the NASW Code of Ethics neglected to prepare you for. Or, the manual instructed one course of action – and your supervisor has chosen the exact opposite path. Some field students know this scenario all too well. As field students in a social work program, with the enviable opportunity to sample careers and be trained in local agencies, social work students often delicately balance roles between employee and student – and may encounter ethical dilemmas along the way.

Planning for these situations while wearing these multiple hats may be challenging. However, our Office of Field Instruction has prepared a few resources for students who find themselves in a sticky situation. (Remember, these resources are not exhaustive, so when in doubt, schedule an appointment with your field liaison!)

### What, So What, and Now What?

This field reflection tool allows students to highlight certain experiences they encounter during field, and determine which lessons and action steps to choose moving forward. By utilizing this template, students can capture the facts of their dilemma, classify their reactions, and reflect upon their significance in educational and organized ways. For students who may feel overwhelmed or unprepared when confronted with ambiguous situations, this flowchart may be the helpful processing tool you need to feel more in control of your learning.

### Are You Being Safe in the Workplace?

Particularly for students working in direct service settings where client interactions may be challenging to predict, the Office of Field Instruction seeks to support students by developing safety preparedness tools. Presented by Director of Field Instruction Betsy Voshel, a YouTube presentation titled "Student Safety: Identifying & Reducing Risk" provides recommendations for ensuring student security and

well-being in field placements. Some of these tips include to "develop a plan of action in the event of danger," and guidelines range from building secure client relationships when conducting home visits to projecting a professional image and communication strategy. The variety of skills offered addresses everything from authoritative presence to honing one's professional intuition. Students can even respond to sample case scenarios to practice implementing these standards.

### Evaluating Decisions and Consequences

This worksheet outlines professional decision-making for those who may be experiencing conflicts in the field. Modeled after the "What, So What, Now What?" methodology above, this questionnaire takes students through a range of brainstorming exercises designed to translate experiences into action. As the form explains: "Balancing these choices and options so that we take full responsibility for our decisions requires having a vision, setting goals and taking some risk." While weighing your options, why not try this tool on for size?

### More Field Instruction Forms & Resources

The Office of Field Instruction has both incoming and current field students covered: from video learning modules to goal-setting guidelines to résumé builders, there is something for everyone. Need some guidance in between appointments with your field liaison? Check out the online resources located in the student portal!

