

Social Work Ethical Decision Making Model

Step 1: Identify the Problem and Contributing Factor(s)

What is the primary ethical issue or dilemma you're facing? What factors are contributing to this problem?

Problem Description:

Contributing Factors:

Step 2: Identify Involved Persons & Institutions

Who are the people and institutions involved in the issue? List down all parties involved directly or indirectly, such as clients, their family members, victims, support systems, other professionals or institutions with a stake in the issue.

Persons Involved:

Institutions Involved:

Step 3: Identify Decision Makers

Who should be involved in the decision-making process? Decide who needs to be part of the decision-making process. This typically involves individuals who hold critical roles or have important information related to the ethical issue.

Identified Decision Makers:

Step 4: Identify Relevant Values

What values are essential to each individual or institution involved? This could include values based on personal beliefs, culture, or institutional norms. It's vital to understand these perspectives to ensure a fair ethical decision-making process.

Values of Participants:

Person/Institution 1:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Person/Institution 2:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Step 5: Identify Goals and Objectives

What objectives do you believe, if achieved, may help resolve the problem? Define the goals or objectives that, once attained, might help address or minimize the ethical issue. These could be changes in behavior, policy, or understanding.

Goals & Objectives:

Step 6: Identify Alternative Intervention Strategies & Targets

Brainstorm alternative strategies that could be effective in resolving the ethical dilemma. Also, consider the target(s) of these interventions – the individuals or aspects most likely to benefit from or be impacted by the strategy.

Alternative Strategies:

Targets of Intervention:

Step 7: Assess Effectiveness & Efficiency of Alternatives

Evaluate each strategy based on its potential to achieve the set objectives. Assess its effectiveness (how well it solves the issue) and efficiency (how it makes the best use of resources).

Effectiveness & Efficiency Assessment:

Strategy 1:

Pro:

Con:

Strategy 2:

Pro:

Con:

Step 8: Select the Most Appropriate Strategy

Select the strategy that best aligns with the anticipated results and resources while causing the least harm and most benefit, given the ethical issues at stake.

Selected Strategy:

Reasoning:

Step 9: Implement the Strategy Selected

Develop a clear action plan detailing the steps of implementation, timeline and who will be responsible for each task.

Action Plan:

Timeline:

Responsibilities:

Step 10: Monitor Implementation

Set up a monitoring plan to keep track of the implementation process and to record any unexpected consequences.

Monitoring Plan:

Potential Unexpected Consequences:

Step 11: Evaluate the Results & Identify Additional Problems

What were the outcomes of the strategy implemented? Did it solve the initial problem or raise any new issues?

Evaluation of Results:

Additional Problems Identified:

Ethical Assessment Screen

After finishing the Social Work Ethical Decision Making Model Template, try to reflect on the following questions.

- Identify your own relevant personal values in relation to this ethical dilemma
- Identify any societal values relevant to the ethical decision to be made.
- Identify the relevant professional values and ethics.
- What can you do to minimize conflicts between personnel, societal, and professional values?
- What can you do to minimize conflicts between your client's, others' and society's rights and interests?
- Have you considered and weighed both the short and long term ethical consequences?

Reference:

Dolgoff, R., Loewenberg, F., & Harrington, D. (2005). Ethical decisions for social work practice. Brooks/Cole – Thomson Learning.