

# ETHICS IN A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

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# Objectives

- \* Recognizing ethical dilemmas in a crisis situation.
- \* Knowing how to appropriately document in crisis or emergency situations.
- \* Understand ethical responsibility in dealing with a co-workers crisis.

# ETHICS

- \* What are they?
  - \* Statutory Ethics vs. Personal Ethics
  - \* Differences across professions, people, cultures...
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- \* **Are ethics in a crisis situation different?**
  - \* **Are ethics different with co-workers?**

# Where to find the rules...

- \* Social Workers Title 675 OAC: Chapter 20 (ethics)
- \* Psychologists Title 59 OS Chapter 34 (Sec. 1370 conduct)
- \* LPC's Title 310 OAC: Chapter 405
- \* LMFT's Title 310 OAC: Chapter 400
- \* LBP's Title 310 OAC: Chapter 405
- \* CM's Title 450 OAC: Chapter 50
- \* LADC's Title 38 OAC: Chapter 10 (code of ethics)

# What constitutes a “Crisis?”

- \* a difficult or dangerous time in which a solution is needed — and quickly. (Vocabulary.com)
- \* In mental health terms, a *crisis* is an individual's reaction to an event, situation, or stressor. (Psychology.com)
- \* A time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger. A time when a difficult or important decision must be made. ***The turning point of a disease when an important change takes place, indicating either recovery or death.*** (Oxford English Dictionary)

# “Textbook” Crisis

- \* Natural Disaster
- \* Economic Depression
- \* Brink of War... or Invasion
- \* Personal Crisis
  - \* Loss of job
  - \* Health problem, scare, or injury
  - \* Loss of loved one
- \* Mental Health Crisis

# Mental Health Crisis

- \* “A person requiring treatment” – Title 43A
- \* Accidental Overdose
- \* Suicide Attempt
- \* “Rock Bottom”
- \* Criminal Justice Involvement

\*\*\*\*Does everyone’s “crisis point” look the same?\*\*\*\*

# Hospital Dilemma

- \* Not a lot of beds...
- \* ER's want psych consumers out quickly & into treatment beds (so do advocates!!)
- \* Only so much indigent care is possible
- \* Lots of federal and state rules (EMTALA, 43A, state bed rules)
- \* Liability!!!



# State System Dilemma

- \* Not a lot of beds...
- \* Only so many \$\$'s to be safety net
- \* Get the sickest of the sick, most aggressive, difficult placements, and not allowed to turn away (**SAFTY NET**)
- \* Stigma
- \* Lots of federal & state rules
- \* Liability

# Scenarios

- \* Sandy is being held in ED. A court commitment petition as been filed. Sandy refuses to give permission to release information to her next of kin because of her active delusions and extreme psychosis.
- \* Sarah presents to the crisis center and states she is suicidal. She is also homeless due to her sex offender status from multiple convictions of child molestation. She is very depressed and wants treatment.

# Scenarios Continued...

- \* Steve presents to the ER after his guardian mother calls law enforcement because he is physically abusive to her.
- \* Simon is a consumer you see for regular therapy. During a session he admits that he is aware he is in liver failure, but won't stop drinking.

# Scenarios Continued

- \* Consumer is psychotic, but not meet ED criteria. Consumer will not allow you to contact any family members.
- \* Family has been searching for a consumer in your care. Consumer is unwilling to sign a release due to psychosis.
- \* Law Enforcement is demanding information about your consumer during a crisis involving police.

# Ethical Duties regarding Co-Workers and other professionals

- \* Your partner in the treatment setting is having severe financial difficulties. You know the house is in foreclosure and he/she is about to lose everything. You notice the billing is for an hour of services when you know the consumer was not there for nearly that long.
- \* A new patient comes to see you and tells you she suspects her previous therapist was under the influence during sessions.

# Co-Workers & other professionals Continued...

- \* During the course of multiple sessions, your patient tells you that his wife's therapist has invited her on a trip. His wife has been seeing her therapist for 5-10 years and they have a close relationship/friendship.
- \* While you are in therapy, your counselor reveals information about another consumer you happen to know.
- \* You know your co-worker is taking Ativan for anxiety. She collapses while at work and EMS asks if she took anything.

# Ethical Guidelines for Crisis Situations

- \* Know where to find your rules!
- \* Be aware of your own bias.
- \* Understand ways of thinking in a crisis situation.
- \* Staff situations/Transparency
- \* **DOCUMENT ANY RULE EXCEPTIONS!!**

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THE END