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Ethics

By

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In case study number one in which the client has been committing welfare fraud several ethical issues arise that I would address when dealing with the case. As social workers we are guided by the Code of Ethics and remember that our primary responsibility is to our clients; however the fact that she has been committing welfare fraud must be addressed while still keeping with privacy and confidentiality. The client has been committing this fraud by using another individual's name and has continued to do this for over three years which places the worker in a situation in which a conflict of interest can interfere with the professional discretion of the worker. On one hand we have an individual committing a crime but on the other we are bound by the privacy and confidentiality, except for compelling professional reasons such as to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or other identifiable person. We must also remember that the code of ethics warns that social workers should not be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception.

Several different individuals and groups will likely be affected by the ethical decision that is made. First you have the client who will undoubtedly be the major individual affected by the decision along with her children. The department of welfare will be affected because if she is allowed to continue committing the fraud they will lose thousands of dollars that could be going to help other individuals with major life issues. The social worker and their company or department will be affected in that they will have to make the ethical decision on how to handle the problem and how to proceed with the issue.

The only viable course of action I can determine would be to advise the client that she needs to stop committing the fraud and explain the issues that could arise should she be caught doing this such as losing her children and going to jail. If the client decides to stop this I would be willing to continue working with the client and offer her services that could benefit her,

however if she continues with this path I would have to terminate services with her. The benefit she is obtaining from doing this is not being in the home with the abusive husband and keeping her children safe, however I would try and find the services that could fill the void that is needed which in this case at the moment is monetary.

I would be in favor of taking the above course of action because my first responsibility is to the client and I have just learned of the crime so that would not associate me with the fraud. Following the above recommendation keeps in line with the code of ethics in that I am protecting my client's confidentiality and what she has told me. At the present time the client and no other individuals are in imminent danger and I am taking action to deal with the fraud situation. I am keeping with my commitment to my client and ensuring her best interest is primary. I believe that under the deontological perspective the fraud may not be as bad as first thought in that the client thinks she is doing this so that she can move out and keep her children and herself safe from future harm. In the clients eyes the fraud is the right thing to do since she is keeping her children safe and not hurting anyone in the process. I believe this fits in with my own personal values. Although I don't blame the client for what she is doing and could not say that if I were in the same situation I might take the same course of action she has, it would be my duty to advise her of the potential consequences which could be detrimental to her and her children.

After reading the case study I would take the action mention prior in that I would talk with the client and explain that I was there to help her and we could find other alternatives other than the fraud, however if she continues with this it would be a conflict of interest for me and I would need to terminate services. I would not report the actions of the client because I do not believe the actions are compelling enough for me to break privacy and confidentiality but nor would I condone it or be a peaty to it if she chose to continue.