



**3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Commonwealth of Virginia CSA Conference**  
***“Practical Application: Applying the Highest Ethics in Our Agencies”***  
**March 24, 2014**

## **What is Ethics?**

Ethics is not about problems.  
Ethics is about doing good.  
Ethics is a responsibility.  
Ethics is personal.  
Ethics is more than following laws.  
Ethics is multidimensional.  
Ethics is an opportunity.  
Ethics is us.

### **Doing Good *Without Doing Harm***

#### **In Multiple Dimensions**

##### **Personal**

Honesty, Integrity, Character, Moral Awareness

##### **Interpersonal**

Service, Respect, Care, Mutual Benefit

##### **Societal**

Long-Term Well-Being of Community, Planet, Society



*From 7 Lenses: Learning the Principles and Practices of Ethical Leadership by Linda Fisher Thornton*



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***The Impact of One Decision***  
***“Staying Current and Competent”***

Your community has been working with a services provider for a long time. You like them. They’re very nice people and seem genuinely concerned about helping the children and families you refer to them. But they don’t evaluate the effectiveness of their services and you have concerns that they may not be staying current and may not be aware of the most and least effective services. Even if they are aware, you have no way to know whether or not their services are effective. You are talking with a new provider who is offering to provide the same type of services. You don’t know them but their services are well regarded. The new provider is clearly aware of the current research, and they carefully evaluate the effectiveness of all of their services. While you have a strong relationship with the long-time services provider and want to be loyal to them, you are concerned about how making that choice might impact children and families.

***Questions For Discussion:***

1. How should we be gathering and using information about which services are most effective for children and families?
2. How important is it that we read widely and stay aware of emerging knowledge and developments that impacts our work?
3. What can happen to our ethics if we are not open to learning?
4. How can we be sure we are holding our services providers accountable for meeting the same high standards that we expect of ourselves?



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***The Impact of One Decision  
“Safety Fence Dilemma”***

You are assisting a family that has a child with severe autism who is renting a small house in a rural community. Their autistic child is very active and likes to go outside. She sometimes wanders off, and they are concerned that she will wander into the street. The family is requesting funds to purchase and install a safety fence on the rented property. If they don't get a safety fence, they will probably have to move. They have been in this home for a while, and would much prefer to stay. The property owner has said that he is not willing to pay for it, because in a rural area, a fence is usually not necessary, but he would allow them to install one. You must decide whether or not to fund the request.

***Questions for Discussion:***

1. Is this the kind of project that CSA was designed for or is it more of a community responsibility?
2. This purchase may be allowed, but would it be appropriate and ethical?
3. What are the possible long-term implications (the ripple effect of this decision) both positive and negative?
4. Will you fund this project or not?



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***The Impact of One Decision***  
***“Pressure to Sign”***

You are part of a team assisting a family that the case manager knows very well. She starts the meeting by describing the family to the team in a very negative light. She says they are “inadequate parents” with a “deadbeat Dad,” and “They’re just here to milk the system.” You have concerns that the case manager may be typecasting the family and not carefully considering how to help them. The team may have a preconceived idea about what will happen if the family receives the services, or may have knowledge about the family that is not being shared. The team is pressuring you to sign off on the documentation to decline services, and you are concerned that this family is not being given a fair chance at services you think might really help them.

***Questions for Discussion:***

1. What is your ethical responsibility as someone who upholds the values of a family-supported, strengths-based approach?
2. How could you, in a polite and non-confrontational way, ask the case manager to share the responsibility for upholding those values for every family?
3. What could be the benefits to the team and the family of taking a more careful and positive look at how to help?
4. Describe how you think the next team meeting with this case manager will go. Will there be a stronger commitment to uphold shared ethical values?