

Advanced Ethics for Prevention Professionals

Ethics in Action Worksheet #1: Personal Reflection

The ability to apply ethical principles and make decisions in “real life” is a hallmark of a capable prevention professional. During this *Advanced Ethics for Prevention Professionals* training, you will engage with several hypothetical scenarios in which characters face ethical dilemmas, reading these scenarios and then going through the Ethical Decision Making Process (EDMP) to choose a course of action for the character(s) involved. This worksheet provides the opportunity to reflect on a personal situation in which you faced an ethical dilemma in the past before engaging in these hypothetical scenarios, in order to ground these discussions in your real life experiences.

INSTRUCTIONS

Think of a time that you had to make a tough decision; where the ethical choice was not immediately clear. Maybe it was a situation where your values and ethics were in conflict—either internally or with another person. Or perhaps it was a time when you were unsure about what was required of you, or the best course of action.

With this situation in mind, respond to the questions below, drawing on the specific details of the situation.

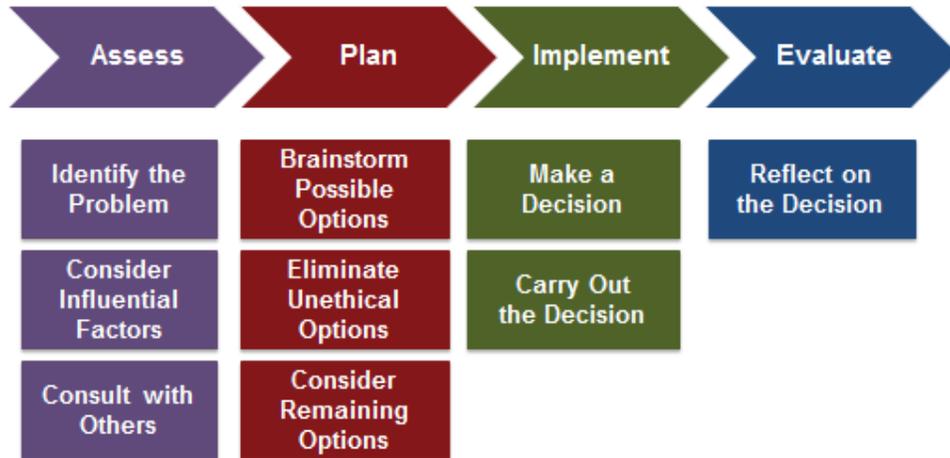
DESCRIBING THE SITUATION YOU FACED

- **Jot some notes about the situation you faced. Who was involved? What was the issue? What decisions did you make or were expected to make? What was the end result?**

- **Think about the choices you made during the situation. How did you feel about them? How do you feel about the outcomes of your decisions?**

USING WHAT YOU KNOW NOW

Think about the ethical decision-making process and the Prevention Code of Ethics that you have had the opportunity to review. Answer the questions below about the situation you personally dealt with in the past in light of what you now know about the EDMP and Code of Ethics.



- What aspects of your decision-making process went well?

- Which of these steps do you think you missed or could have been more fully considered during the situation?

- If you were faced with a similar issue again, what would you do differently?

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Applying the EDMP (Keiko Scenario)

INTRODUCTION

The best way to learn about the ethical decision making process (EDMP) is to use it yourself. This case study activity is designed to provide you with the opportunity to apply the EDMP to a scenario that mirrors the type of ethical dilemma that prevention practitioners may encounter in the course of their work. Read the scenario below and review the EDMP, and then respond to the questions to consider for each EDMP step: Assess, plan, implement, evaluate. After completing the questions, refer back to your responses and provide your recommendations about how the individual(s) in the scenario should proceed.

CASE STUDY SCENARIO

Keiko is a coordinator for a long-standing substance abuse prevention coalition. The coalition is considered high functioning and has many accomplishments. The coalition has strong involvement and support from many community sectors, including a strong group of dedicated parent volunteers.

Recently, a new representative from an area youth center has joined the coalition. Scott has questioned how the coalition operates, including long-standing programs that have been evaluated well. He has a very direct personal style and asks many questions.

At the last coalition meeting, members reviewed a new brochure being developed for parents. Other coalition members liked the brochure. Scott questioned the images and some of the language. Keiko had developed the brochure and felt some of Scott's comments were abrasive.

The coalition chair, a parent volunteer, has told Keiko that she may not want to continue her term. When Keiko questioned the chair about her reasons, she explained that there seems to be more tension among members than in the past. She said it was one thing to chair a group that gets along, but another matter to be the chair with Scott as a member.

THE ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS



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- **Task 3. Consult with others**
 - List people with relevant knowledge or experience to whom Keiko may want to talk about the problem.

STEP 2: PLAN

TASK 1. BRAINSTORM POSSIBLE OPTIONS <i>List as many possible options as possible for addressing the dilemma.</i>	TASK 3. CONSIDER REMAINING OPTIONS <i>Weigh the remaining options by listing out their pros and cons and thinking about the implications of each one.</i>	
TASK 2. ELIMINATE UNETHICAL OPTIONS <i>Use what you know about the Prevention Code of Ethics to eliminate unethical options. Cross them out in the list below.</i>	PROS	CONS

STEP 3: IMPLEMENT

- **Task 1. Make a Decision.**
 - Identify which remaining option from Step 2: Plan you would recommend.

 - Justify your recommendation (e.g., according to the Prevention Code of Ethics).

- **Task 2. Carry Out the Decision.**
 - List the action steps required to carry out this decision.

STEP 4: EVALUATE

- **Task 1. Reflect on the Decision.**
 - List the outcomes you would expect from this course of action.

 - List any additional actions you think might be needed to fully resolve the dilemma.

MAKE YOUR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- How should the individual(s) in this scenario proceed?

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Ethics in Action Worksheet #2: Health Disparities

The Prevention Code of Ethics requires that prevention professionals avoid intentional and unintentional forms of discrimination. As prevention professionals seek to address health disparities and be culturally competent, they must identify ways to involve members of populations experiencing behavioral health disparities. This worksheet presents a hypothetical scenario to help you think about approaches for engaging individuals that experience behavioral health disparities in prevention efforts. Please discuss the questions below in small groups.

SCENARIO: INVOLVING LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUEER/QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) POPULATIONS IN PREVENTION EFFORTS

Through analyzing local assessment data, a coalition in your area has identified that LGBTQ populations experience behavioral health disparities related to substance use rates and consequences. The coalition coordinator has struggled to involve members from this priority population in prevention efforts. She has invited members of the local LGBTQ community to coalition meetings, but they haven't attended.

DISCUSSION

- **Are you aware of any specific considerations or factors that might influence your work with this population?**

- **If this were your community, what resources would you have at your disposal to support efforts to reach out to people who identify as LGBTQ?**

- **Brainstorm possible steps this coordinator might take to reach out to LGBTQ populations.**

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- How might the coordinator respond if someone in the coalition said that there is no further need to reach out to the LGBTQ community in order to include them in prevention efforts because it is clear that substance abuse prevention is not a priority for that population?

*Advanced Ethics for Prevention Professionals***Ethics Policies for Agencies and Organizations**

Organizations involved in prevention efforts should consider developing new or reviewing existing organizational policies related to ethical issues. Clear policies can help to prevent unethical behavior by establishing clear expectations for addressing ethical issues around topics such as the nature of services and confidentiality, and for how the organization plans to address actions that violate organizational values or principles. Below are some key elements to include in these policies.

KEY COMPONENTS

- **Definitions and principles.** The policy should define what ethics is and which principles the organization values. The policy may choose to reference the Prevention Code of Ethics or other existing professional codes.
- **Expectations for specific behaviors.** The policy should clearly note expectations and rules addressing ethical dilemmas that are most likely to arise. These expectations are often included in a more general employee handbook or set of workplace policies. A specific policy about ethics may include reference to the employee handbook and a reminder that many rules in that handbook are also ethical obligations.
 - Supervision of and interaction with youth and other vulnerable populations, use of social media, and use of funds and resources are topics that may exist as separate policies and for which connection to ethical principles could also be underscored.
 - The policy should cover expectations for a variety of roles, including coalition members and volunteers. To what extent does the policy affect non-employee roles? How will the organization deal with unethical behavior of staff, a coalition member or volunteer?
- **Process for reporting unethical behavior.** The policy should outline a process for reporting unethical behavior. It is best practice to include several reporting options, including ways for reporters to remain anonymous, so that employees and volunteers can choose the option that works best for them.
- **Protections for persons reporting concerns.** The policy should affirm a “whistleblower” policy for people reporting concerns in good faith.
- **Consequences of non-compliance.** A strong policy will articulate how the agency or organization will address unethical conduct. It is important that people understand the consequences of unethical behavior.

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- **Implementation and periodic review.** As with any policy, it is important that the organization take action to inform and remind staff about the ethics policy. Organizations should consult with employees, as well as human resources and legal representatives, before implementing any policy. Organizations should review each policy periodically after adoption to ensure that it is current and consistent with relevant laws. The policy should outline a process for how staff and volunteers will be informed of new or revised policy.

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Seeking IRB Approval

Many large institutions – such as universities, hospitals, and some state agencies – have their own Institutional Review Board (IRB) that oversee research activities conducted on site and/or by their members. An IRB's primary responsibility is to protect the rights and well-being of research participants. This handout provides a very brief overview of some key considerations for seeking approval from an IRB in order to collect data and/or conduct research.

Research involves collecting from participants information beyond basic demographics (e.g. about an individual's substance use behaviors or mental health status) that you intend to use in some way (e.g. for evaluation or publication).

Prevention professionals must obtain informed consent from individuals participating in all research-related activities.* In certain situations, prevention professionals must also submit their research procedures, including their plan for obtaining informed consent, to an IRB for approval.

When conducting research, **prevention professionals must seek IRB approval if they...**

- Are required to do so as a condition of funding
- Work for- or plan to conduct research on the premises of an institution with an IRB
- Intend to produce generalizable knowledge for the field of prevention (e.g., publish in a peer-reviewed journal, seek model program status)

If you're new to the world of research, learning about and adhering to the many rules guiding ethical practice may seem overwhelming. So if you have even an inkling that you may want to someday use any participant information for research purposes, connect as soon as you can with your evaluators, state agency representatives, and other partners with research expertise – they can help you move forward in preparing to collect data or conduct research in an appropriate and ethical way.

**Consent to participate in research differs from consent to release confidential information, which we cover in the Confidentiality Principle.*

*Advanced Ethics for Prevention Professionals***Social Media Use in Prevention: Ethical Considerations**

As use of social media as a communications tool grows, so too does its adoption by the prevention field. Prevention practitioners currently use social media to connect and collaborate with colleagues, partners, and the people we serve, to design, deliver, and evaluate our prevention efforts, and to promote our messages and work. It's important to adhere to the same code of ethics for our face-to-face encounters when using social media for prevention efforts.

This handout is designed to highlight some considerations for applying the Prevention Code of Ethics to our social media activities. We hope it will stimulate your thinking, as well as conversations with colleagues about these issues.

PRINCIPLE 1: NON-DISCRIMINATION

To ensure that your social media efforts are consistent with this principle, consider the following:

- **Access.** One of the key tenets of the non-discrimination principle is to ensure that all members of your focus population have comparable access to the services and resources you are providing. To this end, think carefully about the platforms you choose, as well as the size and complexity of the materials you post. For example, files that are too large may be difficult to access for people living in areas with limited bandwidth or slow Web connections. Social media use is not evenly distributed across all populations (e.g., less used in rural areas, among seniors¹) and the Internet is not accessible to all, especially in remote areas. Learn about how the populations you are trying to reach use media (e.g., at www.pewinternet.org/) and choose communication channels that will increase the likelihood of reaching your intended audience.
- **Accommodation.** Be sure to accommodate individuals with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities² on your social media sites. For more guidance on how to provide appropriate accommodation, see this resource from the Government-wide Section 508 Accessibility Program: <http://www.section508.gov/content/build/create-accessible-video-social>.
- **Cultural Competence.** Interacting effectively with members of diverse population groups in ways that are respectful and responsive is essential in all communications, both on and off social media. There are many ways to demonstrate cultural competence in your communication efforts, including: providing content in the native language(s) of your target

¹ Perrin, A. *Social media usage 2005-2015*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/08/social-networking-usage-2005-2015/>

² United States Access Board. *About the Section 508 standards*. Retrieved from <https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/communications-and-it/about-the-section-508-standards>

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audience, being sensitive with your word choices, and using photography that reflects the diversity of your audience.

PRINCIPLE 2: COMPETENCE

To ensure that your social media efforts are consistent with this principle, consider the following:

- **Education/Training.** As with any task you undertake in prevention, it's important that you start with a clear understanding of what's involved, and have the knowledge and skills needed to complete the task successfully. Using social media is no exception. If you're not already a social media maven (and really — is anyone, given how rapidly the field evolves?), make sure you get the training you need to make the most of this approach and use it effectively. And what's great is that much of this information is available online!
- **Standards.** Even though social media tends to be considered a more “casual” medium, it's nonetheless important to ascribe the same standards to items posted online as to those developed and disseminated in print. To this end, ensure that all posts are well-researched, well-written, and grammatically correct. Also make sure that anyone with responsibility for posting social media content is well-supervised, and that your organization has a social media policy in place to guide its efforts. Finally, carefully review content by other individuals and organizations before you “like,” share, or retweet it, to make sure it aligns with the standards and stances of your organization.
- **Evaluation.** Regularly assess whether your social media is being implemented as planned and is meeting your goals. Is it updated regularly? Is it growing over time? Are you achieving your desired outcomes? Learn more about evaluating your social media efforts with this tool: www.samhsa.gov/capt/tools-learning-resources/evaluating-social-media-efforts.

PRINCIPLE 3: INTEGRITY

To ensure that your social media efforts are consistent with this principle, consider the following:

- **Accuracy.** Ensure that all content posted on your social media sites is true and accurate. If mistakes are discovered, make sure to correct them right away.
- **Fair Credit.** Check to see that sources for all material (e.g., text, photos, videos) posted on your social media sites are cited, that you obtain appropriate permission for copyrighted material, and that none of the content is plagiarized. (You can, however, share material from other websites or social media sites on your organization's social media accounts, as this credits the source.)
- **Preparation.** Be ready to respond appropriately if someone discloses sensitive or personal information on your social media sites. If you haven't already done so, include guidance in your organization's social media policy on handling these types of situations.

PRINCIPLE 4: NATURE OF SERVICES

To ensure that your social media efforts are consistent with this principle, consider the following:

- **Involvement.** Be sure to include members of your focus population in planning, implementing, and evaluating your social media content. This is not only respectful, but will also help to ensure that your efforts are well informed and sensitive to the cultural norms of those you are trying to reach. Giving your target audience a voice in your social media efforts also helps to develop the buy-in you will need to sustain your social media efforts over time.
- **Professional Boundaries.** Make certain to keep your personal social media accounts separate from your organization's accounts and to distinguish when you are posting as an individual vs. when you are doing so as a representative of your agency. Also, bear in mind that it's important to respect the same boundaries on social media as you would for in-person contact with the public and service recipients (e.g., avoid forming dual relationships through private messaging on social media). Prepare statements to use ahead of time should such boundary issues arise.
- **Reporting Requirements.** Be sensitive to evidence of abuse, neglect, or bodily harm that may be revealed online (e.g., potentially suicidal comments posted by a young person) and report it to the proper authorities, such as the office of child protective services or a local law enforcement agency. The same information meriting reporting face-to-face also needs to be reported when acquired online.

PRINCIPLE 5: CONFIDENTIALITY

To ensure that your social media efforts are consistent with this principle, consider the following:

- **Permission.** Be sure to get permission before posting any photos or videos of program participants to your sites. Also, state on the site that permission has been obtained for any such material. Keep necessary documentation of this, as required by your organization.
- **Security.** Recognize that communication on a social media site is never entirely secure, and that confidential information you send to colleagues or sent to you by program participants — even by private message on social media — may not remain confidential. Thus, think carefully about what you post, taking great caution with anything that might be considered confidential.
- **Legal Issues.** Make sure you have a legal contact ready to advise you on any issues that arise related to confidentiality laws and regulations. Also have a plan, developed in consult with your legal contact, for emergency situations in which confidential information disclosed on your social media sites might need to be released (e.g., if someone sends a private message about plans to hurt others).

PRINCIPLE 6: ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS FOR COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

To ensure that your social media efforts are consistent with this principle, consider the following:

- **Advocating.** Promoting prevention is one of the important tenets of this principle, and your organization's social media sites can help you do so. Your social media presence can be used for educating community members, the media, and elected officials to raise awareness of your priority problem, increase awareness of key issues, and mobilize support. Keep in mind, however, that any funding limitations or restrictions on your professional ability to advocate extends to your social media presence (see below).
- **Non-Lobbying.** Prevention practitioners should take great caution before engaging in any type of lobbying activities or advocacy that attempts to influence specific legislation, as doing so could place your organization's tax-exempt status at risk. This applies as much online as it does in person. It is important to note, however, that lobbying is distinct from educating the public or legislators on a specific issue — the latter is not considered lobbying.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Reamer, F. G. (2011). *Developing a social media ethics policy*. Retrieved from http://www.socialworktoday.com/news/eoe_070111.shtml

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Applying the EDMP: Scenarios

The best way to learn about the Ethical Decision-making Process (EDMP) is to practice using it. This activity from the *Advanced Ethics for Prevention Professionals* training offers you the opportunity to apply the EDMP scenarios that mirrors the type of ethical dilemmas you might encounter in your work.

First, you will be assigned one of the Set A Scenarios below. Read the scenario, review the EDMP, and then use the steps of the process to respond to the questions that follow. After answering all of the questions, review your responses and then provide your recommendations for how the individual(s) in the scenario should proceed. You will then repeat this process with an assigned Set B Scenario.

SET A SCENARIOS

Carlos Scenario

Carlos works at a large non-profit agency that receives funding from a range of public and private funders. The budget for one grant includes Carlos as a .8 full-time equivalent (FTE) employee (32 hours per week). He is also budgeted to spend eight hours per week on fundraising, which is paid through agency general funds.

Carlos has been given additional responsibilities around fundraising and is consistently spending closer to 15 hours per week on those activities. When the situation first started, he talked to his supervisor Brenda about his workload and whether he should give up some of his fundraising tasks or if he could do anything more efficiently. She told him he is doing a great job and it is fine if in the short-term he is spending less time on the grant duties. She advised him to try to work toward his assigned FTE.

After another month, Brenda assigned a big fundraising project to Carlos. When he asked her about his FTE assignment, she told him that it is fine as long as he is completing the requirements of his grant. She requested that his timesheet reflect his assigned FTE "as closely as possible."

Carlos has met all deadlines and deliverables in the grant, but still does not feel comfortable. In a recent meeting, Brenda shared that the grant is exactly on budget, which made Carlos wonder what has been charged to the grant for his staff time.

How can Carlos handle this situation?

Danielle Scenario

Danielle has recently started working for a substance abuse prevention coalition. She moved into the community from out of state.

Several coalition members have been very welcoming to her. Because she won't be traveling home for Thanksgiving, Margot, a coalition member, has invited Danielle to join her family celebration. "You won't really know our community until you've joined us for a holiday," explained Margot. "I think we do things differently than where you come from."

During dinner, everyone is offered a glass of wine, including the teenagers. Danielle understands that Margot's family comes from a culture where wine with dinner is common and accepted, but she feels uncomfortable being around youth who are drinking.

What should Danielle say or do in this situation?

Philip Scenario

Philip is a prevention professional coordinating a large urban community coalition. The coalition recently received a new grant that includes an emphasis on reducing health disparities. Data collected by the coalition's data workgroup revealed that while Hispanic/Latino youth are using opioids at a similar rate as white youth, they are three times more likely to die from an opioid overdose. Based on these findings, they suggest that the coalition focus on this problem in their upcoming work.

The full coalition is in the process of identifying which health disparities to address in their four-year funding cycle. Veronica, a new coalition member, expresses concerns about the proposal to address fatal opioid overdose among Hispanic/Latino youth:

"As a Latina mother, I was excited to be involved in your efforts to keep our youth and communities safe. I have wanted to see more efforts geared toward the Latino community. I am nervous, though, about focusing on opioid overdose. I'm worried that this focus will stigmatize my community. Why do your efforts with Latinos need to be so negative? Can't we focus instead on the strengths in our community, rather than on the negative data? We already have people who think of us as drug dealers. I'm afraid your efforts could do more harm than good."

Other coalition members have indicated that they think this is an important health disparity to address, and would like the coalition to vote on how to proceed. Should Philip, as the coalition coordinator, allow the vote to take place? How can Philip handle the situation?

Takoda Scenario

Takoda is the coordinator for a coalition that recently received a five-year prevention grant. The new funding has more than doubled their annual budget.

With the support of the new grant, the coalition has begun developing a new social marketing campaign. For the first time, the coalition has the resources to hire a professional firm to design and conduct the campaign.

Lori, a long-time coalition member, works for a local billboard advertising company. In the past, her company has donated staff time to create ads that were used both in billboards and in other media. The company also donated billboard space.

Lori has begun asking questions about the process for selecting a firm to lead the campaign and about the campaign budget.

Takoda is concerned about whether he can use a coalition member as a vendor. He is also worried about how Lori will react if her company is not chosen to design and conduct the upcoming campaign. How should Takoda approach this situation?

Sara Scenario

Medical marijuana has recently been legalized in the state.

Sara is the coordinator for a substance abuse prevention coalition that has been approached by David, the director of a local cannabis dispensary. He would like to join the executive committee of the coalition and is particularly interested in efforts to educate young people about the dangers of illicit drug use.

Your coalition chair, Mariana, is very upset at the idea of David joining the coalition at all, let alone on the executive committee. She feels David's involvement would undermine the coalition's efforts and legitimize medical marijuana use when the research is not clear.

When Sara expresses reluctance to David about his request to join the coalition's executive committee, he reminds her that he is the manager of a legal business who is trying to be involved in the community.

How should Sara respond to David's request?

SET B SCENARIOS

Beth Scenario

Beth is a supervisor at a local human services agency that provides substance misuse prevention and treatment services.

One day Beth gets an email from a community member she does not know. The email includes a screen shot of a Facebook post from Gabe, one of Beth's employees. The emailer was very upset about the racial overtones and insensitivity of the post.

Although it is his personal page, Beth knows that Gabe sometimes mentions in his posts his work with the agency. He also regularly talks about how much he believes in and supports prevention. In the post that Beth received, Gabe mentioned a delay in an upcoming agency event. The post included, "I usually enjoy my job but increasingly I'm frustrated with the people in our community. They don't get things done and don't take responsibility. I'm beginning to understand why this city has so many problems. Those people deserve what they get."

As a supervisor, what actions should Beth take?

Jawan Scenario

Jawan is a supervisor in an agency that leads prevention programming at the local high school. Chandra, one of his staff members who leads the programs at the school, came to him a few weeks ago with concerns about the performance of her co-leader, Michelle. Chandra is concerned that Michelle has been late for classes and has been less than enthusiastic when working with students. Chandra is concerned that Michelle may be depressed. Because of confidentiality, Jawan cannot tell Chandra that he has already referred Michelle to the Employee Assistance Program.

Chandra has now come to see Jawan again because the high school principal spoke to her about concerns about the quality of the prevention programming and mentioned his dissatisfaction with Michelle, specifically. Chandra is concerned about the drop in quality, and feels responsible for preserving the program's reputation. She's also frustrated by the position she has been put in: she said it's hard to partner with Michelle because she feels she is also responsible for and judged by Michelle's performance.

Chandra wants to know how she should respond to the principal's concerns about Michelle, the quality of the agency's programming and her responsibilities to program participants. Jawan is concerned about how much information he can share with Chandra and what kind of guidance he should give her. How should Jawan respond to Chandra's concerns and address the larger issues relating to the agency's programming?

Tonia Scenario

Tonia is a supervisor at a large non-profit agency that receives funding from a range of public and private funders.

Carlos works at the same agency and has come to Tonia for advice about how he has been directed to spend his staff time. He knows the budget for one grant includes him as a .8 full-time equivalent (FTE) employee (32 hours per week). He is also budgeted to spend eight hours per week on fundraising, which is paid through agency general funds.

He has been given additional responsibilities around fundraising and is consistently spending more than eight hours per week on those activities. He said that when he has talked to his supervisor, she told him that it is fine as long as he is completing the requirements of his grant. He has met all deadlines and deliverables in the grant, but still does not feel comfortable. He believes he is being asked to do something unethical.

He said he thought Tonia should know about the situation, but he does not want her to take action. Tonia does not supervise Carlos and his program falls under a different division in the agency. What advice could Tonia give Carlos? Can she honor his request to not take direct action?