DISABILITY RESEARCH
A Hallmark Research Initiative

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

L'ARCHE Australia

asid
research to practice

Often it's hard to know …. what's the right thing to do

Dr. David Treanor &
Prof. Keith McVilly

A Proposition

- Having **knowledge** and **technical competence** are necessary but insufficient educational goals for our direct support workforce.

- The interaction of life circumstances of people with a disability, the nature of disability and the demands of the work place demand more, especially in an NDIS environment!

- We need a workforce that is **ethically informed** and **professional** in its conduct.

What is Professionalism?

- Four traditional characteristics of a professional:

    1. Utilizes a systematic body of theoretical knowledge
    2. Acts with authority
    3. Holds a monopoly of practice
    4. Adheres to a code of ethics.

* Might professionalism look a little different in the disability sector?

** How might we begin to develop **a new way of being professional** in disability services?*

Professional Culture

- A professional culture is typically evident where:

  (a) There is service to the community;
  (b) There is protection of the vulnerable;
  (c) The occupation or work role is more than a job, more than a means of earning an income; and
  (d) Egalitarian and collegial practice is the dominant way of working together.

  *What might a professional culture in the disability sector look like; what might be **the distinctive characteristics of a professional culture in the disability sector**?*

Our Topic of Inquiry

- Might the teaching of **applied professional ethics** for disability workers offer one means of building a more ethical and inclusive society?

- Might education in **ethics** and **ethical decision making** be important components of the formation of a safe and effective disability sector workforce?

- If so, how might we advance these propositions; from theory to practice, using established educational approaches?

Professional Ethics are fundamentally about our relationships

- A right relationship with **myself**, whereby professionals attend to their own welfare, including appropriate self-care. However, their work is not just about their own ends.

- A relationship with **people** (or clients) **and the wider society**. This means attending to issues of power, vulnerability and reliability associated with some very disadvantaged client groupings. It is such integrity of relationships with clients that informs the aspirations found in this Australasian Code of Ethics for Direct Support Professionals.

- Relationship with **one's peers in the profession**. It is in relationship with such peers that we grow, develop knowledge and further our skills.

(Newell, 2007)

Towards an Australasian Code of Ethics for Direct Support Professionals

What do we believe to be important?
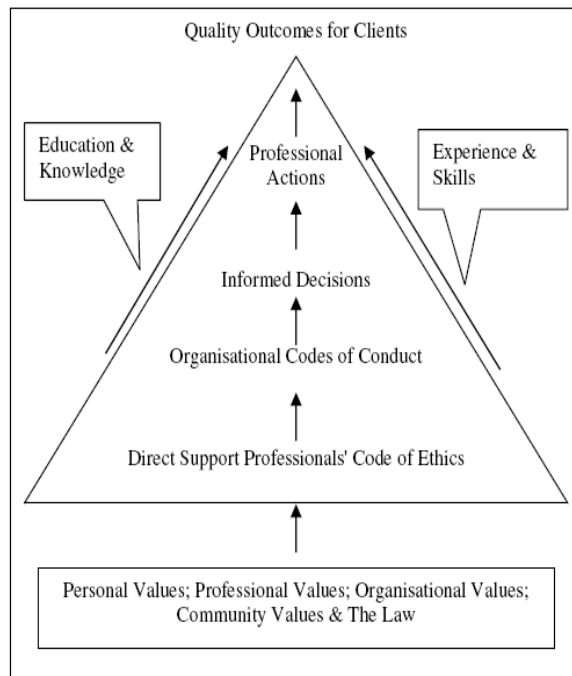
How should we act?

What is our ethical position?

A 5-year project across Australia & New Zealand.

Talked with and listening to direct support staff:

- ✓ *When is it hard to know the right thing to do?*

- ✓ *How do you work out what is the right thing to do?*

Towards an Australasian Code of Ethics for Direct Support Professionals

Quality Outcomes for Clients

Education & Knowledge

Professional Actions

Experience & Skills

Informed Decisions

Organisational Codes of Conduct

Direct Support Professionals' Code of Ethics

Personal Values; Professional Values; Organisational Values; Community Values & The Law

McVilly, Martin-Nixon, & Neville, 2003

12 areas of consideration addressed by The *ASID Australasian Code of Ethics for Direct Support Professionals, 2007*

1. Professional Competence.
2. Evidence-based practice.
3. Professional Conduct.
4. Self-care and the care of colleagues.
5. Collaboration.
6. Accountability.
7. Consent.
8. Confidentiality.
9. Relationships.
10. Client rights.
11. Advocacy.
12. Skill Development & life-long learning.

How might we translate our research into educational resources & programmes that will influence practice?

Australasian Code of Ethics for Direct Support Professionals

First Edition, November 2007
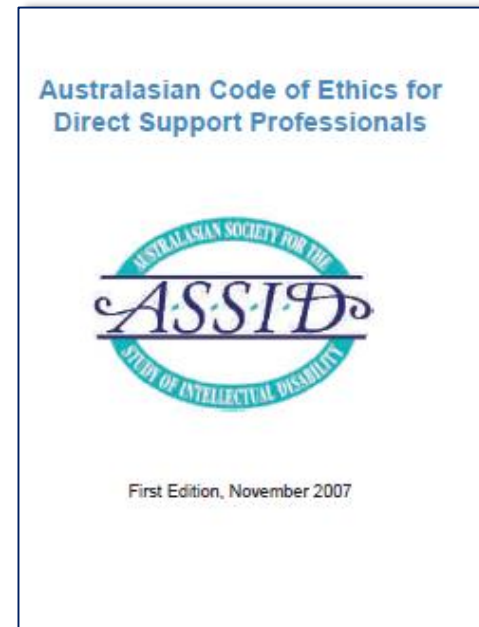
Can you teach ethics?

- Yes …?

- **Ethical Competence** is a personal capability that embraces ethical knowledge, courage, a willingness to acquire skills in decision-making and to undertake ethical action.

4 Approaches to teaching Applied Ethics

1. The moral instruction school.

2. The ventilatory school.

3. The critical insight school.

4. The situation ethics school.

1. Moral Instruction School

- Clarification of personal and professional values.
- Ethics education is an induction into the role of codes of conduct, rules, etc. that define the profession.
- Understanding the structure of power and authority within the disability service system.

2. The Ventilatory School

- Focus on how people *feel* about ethical dilemmas.
- Acknowledges the interrelationship of feelings, attitudes and values in the exercise of personal moral responsibility and practice.
- Develops insights into how conflict can arise in applying rules to lives.

3. The Critical Thinking School

- Emphasizes the importance of ethical education.
- Approach offers a balance to the ventilatory approach school.
- Problem solving approach based on ethical theories.
- Ethics integrated across disability curriculum.

The Situation Ethics School

- Pays attention to specific people and situations.
- Identifies and values the nature and character of people.
- Aims to both identify the 'uniqueness' of the individual and their circumstance, and be flexible with sensitivity to culture and gender.
- Possible to identity the hidden complexity and agendas of different people.

Discussion time …….

- Might **professionalism** look a little different in the disability sector?

- How might we begin to develop **a new way of being professional** in disability services?

- What might a professional culture in the disability sector look like; what might be **the distinctive characteristics of a professional culture in the disability sector**?

- Might the teaching of **applied professional ethics** offer one means of building a more ethical and inclusive society?

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