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Ethical Dilemmas in Counselor Education: The Case of Sasha and Hector

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Abstract

The relationship between clinical supervisor and supervisee is fraught with ethical concerns, as the supervisor serves multiple functions within the relationship. The supervisor has a responsibility to evaluate and foster the supervisee's professional and clinical growth and development. Additionally, the supervisor has a responsibility to serve as a gatekeeper to the profession and consider the welfare of the supervisee's current and future clients. The case of Sasha and Hector presents numerous ethical issues to be processed dually with separate regard given to the supervisor-supervisee relationship and the counselor-client relationship. The University of New Orleans Doctoral Ethics Team analyzed and evaluated possible courses of action to aid in resolution of these presented dilemmas. In doing so, the team reviewed current scholarly literature and applied appropriate ethical codes in the context of an ethical decision-making model. The team concluded by offering recommendations within the context of pertinent legal, ethical, and moral codes.

Doctoral-Level-Scenario: The Case of Sasha and Hector

Counselor educators and supervisors face many ethical dilemmas while educating and training future counselors and counselor interns. The following case study highlights many of these dilemmas. Sasha, a Caucasian 37-year-old, is a counselor educator at a small university. She is recovering from a lengthy bout with breast cancer and is just back to teaching. This semester, she is serving as a supervisor to two students who are in practicum at different sites. One of the students is a 25-year-old Hispanic male, Hector, who is newly diagnosed with leukemia. While his grades in the program have been acceptable, he doesn't seem to be able to establish rapport appropriately with clients, and he is struggling in his practicum. Some faculty members are concerned that his recent diagnosis is affecting his ability to effectively counsel others, but Sasha recognizes a feeling of unusual connection with him and feels certain that she can help him succeed. He's expressed some feelings of depression and anxiety, and Sasha has informally offered to work with him on developing appropriate coping skills and healthy expression of these feelings. During a supervision session, Hector reports that one of his clients, a 14-year-old boy, has disclosed that he's homosexual. Due to Hector's conservative religious beliefs, he does not feel as if he can appropriately counsel someone who engages in behavior with which he does not agree. He asks if he can refer the client to the other practicum student, and Sasha agrees that it would be in the best interest of the client; she also fears that the stress of the situation will negatively affect Hector and is concerned about his welfare as well. The site supervisor where Hector is doing his practicum vehemently disagrees with this decision, and she has notified both Hector and Sasha that she intends to take the issue to the dean of the university counseling department.

Selection of Ethical Decision-Making Model

Consulting the profession's ethical standards is a primary obligation of counselors when facing an ethical dilemma. The American Counselor Association Code of Ethics (hereinafter referred to as the *ACA Code*; American Counseling Association [ACA], 2005) serves as an appropriate guide for Sasha and Hector to consult and enforces the notion that professionals are expected to utilize an ethical decision-making model to work through the dilemma.

Various ethical decision-making models were recommended in earlier studies that examined the various types of multiple relationships between faculty and students in higher education (Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth, 1997; Blevins-Knabe, 1992; Bowman & Hatley, 1995; Kitchener, 1988; Kolbert, Morgan, & Brendel, 2002; Sullivan & Ogloff, 1998). Cottone and Claus (2000) surveyed the literature regarding numerous ethical decision-making models and organized them into practiced-based, theoretically or philosophically-based, and specialty-based categories. Cottone and Claus found that, although several models had similar steps or stages, it was difficult to evaluate their effectiveness based on the lack of empirically-cited support by those utilizing the models.

Some ethical decision-making models encourage clinicians to fully consider the context in which the ethical quandary occurred (Cottone, 2001; Hill, Glaser, & Harden, 1998). As with the current scenario concerning Sasha and Hector, having an increased knowledge of the context in which the situation is occurring could sway consultants to

utilize a model that best pertains to the situation (Vergés, 2010). Based on the available information, the team chose to utilize the *Practitioner's Guide to Ethical Decision-Making*, proposed by the ACA Ethics Committee to evaluate the current scenario and make recommendations for how all parties may proceed (Forester-Miller & Davis, 1996).

Step #1: Identify the Problem

According to the chosen ethical decision-making model, one must start by identifying the problem. It is important to observe the problem objectively while considering all legal, ethical, and professional issues involved in the scenario (Forester-Miller & Davis, 1996). The team acknowledges the scenario may include information not provided in the initial presentation of the dilemma. Based on the information we have, the following actions for how to proceed are suggested. The first prevalent issue in this scenario is that Sasha may be indirectly harming Hector's clients by allowing him to discriminate based on sexual orientation (ACA, 2005, A.4). Additionally, Sasha is indirectly preventing Hector's client's ability to have autonomy in sessions to discuss the issues of his choosing. It is important to enable clients' autonomy to choose their course in counseling, so as to empower them to take ownership of their own growth (Kitchener, 1984). Furthermore, in the supervisor and gate-keeping roles, Sasha is responsible for the actions of Hector and can be held legally responsible under the principle of vicarious liability. According to Remley and Herlihy (2014), vicarious liability is the notion that those who hold authority over others will be held responsible for the actions of those under their direction.

Next, it appears that Sasha's behavior may indicate that her judgment is impaired, whether due to her unresolved issues from her illness and resulting connection to Hector, or her desire to help Hector overcome his intra-personal obstacles. Sasha is demonstrating favoritism towards Hector and thus is unable to objectively and honestly assess him from a clinical standpoint. According to Sullivan and Ogloff (1998), impaired objectivity of a faculty member and concurrent favoritism for one student (in this case supervisor and supervisee, respectively) may lead to neglect of other students and further boundary violations. In other words, Sasha's favoritism towards Hector could impede her supervision effectiveness with her other supervisee. Additionally, Sasha should err on the side of caution when addressing Hector's depression and anxiety in a supervision session. If the boundaries of the supervision session in question are not clearly defined prior to the session, Sasha may fall into the role of Hector's counselor. Finally, Sasha is damaging her relationship with professionals in the field, which could strain the relationship between the university and the practicum site at which Hector is completing his practicum. Sasha could also be compromising her credibility and position at the University, as the supervisor has considered making a formal complaint to the dean.

Step #2: Ethical Codes Pertaining to the Dilemma

Following the "Identification of the Problem" stage of Forester-Miller and Davis' decision-making model, the next stage involves applying the *ACA Code* and other applicable ethical codes that pertain to the ethical dilemma. The *Ethical Guidelines for Counseling Supervisors* (1993) created by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) are pertinent, as they address the issue of supervision within the counselor education setting. It is important to note that portions of the aforementioned

standards have been incorporated into the most recent version the *ACA Code*. The team will focus primarily on the *ACA Code*, including the sections regarding supervision in counseling.

Client welfare. The *ACA Code* states the client's welfare is the primary responsibility of the counselor and supervisor (ACA, 2005, F.1.a). Sasha's actions are out of compliance with the *ACA Code* as she has chosen to honor Hector's request over his client's needs. Sasha's concern that he will be uncomfortable counseling someone whose lifestyle with which he disagrees should not alter her ability to consider the client's needs over the preferences and values of her supervisee. Furthermore, Sasha is setting a dangerous precedent for Hector to refer any client whose lifestyle offends his personal values (ACA, 2005, A.4.b.).

Personal values. Hector's personal values are influencing his decision to refer his client. This directly opposes the *ACA Code*'s position on the issue (ACA, 2005, A.4.b), in which the importance of respecting clients' diversity is stressed.

Discrimination. Hector's request to abstain from providing counseling services to a client based on the client's sexual orientation is in conflict with the *ACA Code* (ACA, 2005, C.5). As Hector's reasoning for referring the client is based on the client's sexual orientation, his behavior toward his client could be considered a discriminatory practice.

Ethical and legal standards. It is the responsibility of supervisors to inform supervisees of all legal and ethical codes and standards that apply to counselors and "encourage these counselors to adhere to professional standards of practice" (ACA, 2005, F.4.c). Due the limited knowledge the team has regarding Hector and Sasha's interaction, it is unclear if Sasha has either failed to inform Hector or has not encouraged him to comply with ethical codes and laws that address his obligations to clients whose values differ from his own.

Boundaries in the supervisory relationship. The *ACA Code* encourages supervisors to set appropriate boundaries early in supervisory relationships in order to prevent boundary role confusion (ACA, 2005, F.3.a.). Barnett (2008) categorized boundary issues for dual relationships into either "boundary crossings" or "boundary violations." Boundary crossings become violations when mal-intent is present, the relationship is perceived as negative and unwelcome, the relationship occurs to gratify the mentor's need(s), and when the nature of the relationship is inconsistent with professional standards. By offering to address Hector's intra-personal obstacles in the context of supervision, Sasha's actions are pushing the boundaries of the supervision relationship and heading towards becoming a boundary violation. The *ACA Code* instructs counselors to provide referrals for supervisees in need of counseling, but firmly states the counseling should not be directly provided by the supervisor (ACA, 2005, F.5.c.).

Impairment. Impairment is another prominent issue addressed by the *ACA Code* (ACA, 2005, F.8.b.). Sasha may be unable to recognize the impact of Hector's physical and mental health problems on his clinical abilities. As a supervisor, it is Sasha's responsibility to recognize her supervisee's impairment and address the issues openly with Hector (ACA, 2005, F.5.b.). As a supervisor Sasha has a duty to encourage Hector to address his personal issues, as well as a duty to prevent future harm to clients if Hector's impairment goes unaddressed. Furthermore, Sasha may have unresolved personal issues related to her own illness that could impede her judgment as a

professional. This may be affecting her ability as a supervisor to provide objective feedback and serve Hector and his clients in an effective manner.

Recognizing limitations of supervisees. Supervisors are charged with appropriately recognizing and addressing limitations of supervisees. They do this by regularly evaluating supervisees and providing appropriate feedback. When a limitation is noted, it is advised that supervisors consult with other professionals and take appropriate steps to help the supervisee remediate the deficiencies. The supervisor should inform the supervisee of all options available to him/her. This could come in the form of a remediation plan, further monitoring, or dismissal from the site or program if improvements have not been made and if clients are not receiving competent services (ACA, 2005, F.5.). So far, it appears Sasha has not implemented this requirement by not addressing Hector's deficits through a remediation plan or other supports, nor has she provided any other options to help Hector strengthen his skills besides discussing them in supervision. Sasha has not yet consulted with other professionals in the field and was unreceptive to feedback about Hector's performance by his site supervisor.

Interdisciplinary teamwork. Interdisciplinary teamwork applies to this scenario in that Sasha, other departmental faculty, and Hector's site supervisor comprise the interdisciplinary team responsible for Hector's practicum experience. The *ACA Code* specifies that members of an interdisciplinary team converge to discuss how to serve the best interests of clients, utilizing the ethics and values of the profession (ACA, 2005, D.1.c.). The case study reveals that the two professionals supervising Hector did not agree on the best course of action; thus, the site supervisor is addressing the matter with the university dean.

In conclusion, multiple ethical codes apply to this case study regarding both Hector and Sasha's responsibilities as professionals. In further evaluating the scenario, the team primarily focused on Sasha's role as a supervisor and applied the following sections of the *ACA Code* that addressed supervisory deficits related to: issues of client welfare, personal values, discrimination, ethical and legal standards, boundaries in supervision, the need for counseling in supervision, impairment, recognizing limitations of supervisees, and working on a multidisciplinary team (ACA, 2005).

Step #3: Determining the Nature and Dimensions of the Dilemma

Step three in this model is to determine the nature and dimensions of the stated dilemma. The nature and dimensions of the dilemma are to be analyzed within the context of principle ethics as cited by Kitchener (1984) to include justice, non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy, and fidelity. These principles will be discussed dually as they apply to the supervisor-supervisee relationship of Sasha and Hector and as they apply to the counselor-client relationship of Hector and his 14-year-old client.

Justice in this context does not mean that all persons will be treated the same, but rather, "treating equals equally and unequals unequally but in proportion to their relevant differences" (Kitchener, 1984). This principle of justice is of concern as it remains unclear whether or not Sasha is treating both supervisees objectively, or if she is showing favoritism to Hector and his client issue due to their shared experience of battling serious illnesses. Sullivan and Ogloff (1998) emphasized that compromised objectivity of the supervisor and subsequent student favoritism is a dangerous boundary crossing that could lead to further (more serious) boundary violations.

The principle of non-maleficence is seen as a gate-keeping principle in that the focus is on avoiding causing harm to others. If Sasha condones Hector's decision to refer the client to someone else because of his belief system then she is, albeit unintentionally, harming Hector in his professional development. If Hector is allowed to refer this client immediately after the client discloses something as personally salient as sexual orientation, this could do irreparable damage to the client. The client may feel judged for his belief system instead of being allowed to work through his issues and concerns in a safe environment. In a similar vein, beneficence in regards to both relationships will be in jeopardy. Sasha, by allowing the case in question to be referred, is not being pro-active in the supervisory role. Similarly, Hector appears to be considering his welfare and personal belief system above those of his client.

The principle of autonomy is also being called into question. This principle addresses the concepts of independence and freedom of choice, yet it also addresses how one's values and beliefs may negatively affect others (Kitchener, 1984). As a supervisor, Sasha's primary obligation is to the client of her supervisee. Sasha may believe she is respecting Hector's autonomy by allowing him to refer the client when condoning this request is in direct opposition to the principle of autonomy in relation to the client.

Fidelity, as described by Kitchener (1984), is comprised of loyalty, faithfulness, and honoring commitments within the context of a therapeutic relationship. Hector's decision to refer the client could impede the client's growth. Similarly, Sasha is not honoring her commitment as Hector's teacher and possibly impeding his growth if she allows him to ignore his fidelity to his client.

Step #4: Generate Possible Courses of Action

The next step, when following the chosen ethical model, is to generate possible courses of action. The main focus of this step is to brainstorm and generate as many ideas as possible to be further analyzed in step five for their efficacy. In this step it is ideal to consult with colleagues to explore all available options for consideration, including re-evaluating ethical and legal codes and other possible ethical decision-making models. The team identified the following as possible courses of action: 1) refer both Sasha (supervisor) and Hector (supervisee) to personal counseling; 2) refer supervisee to a different faculty member for supervision; 3) supervisor to consult with other faculty members; 4) gather more information; 5) supervisee takes a suggested leave of absence from the program; 6) propose a remediation plan for supervisee (which may include aforementioned stage 6; 7) supervisor take a leave of absence from her role as supervisor; 8) the supervisor evaluates her relationship with the supervisee in terms of the counseling relationship versus the supervisor relationship; 9) refer supervisee's client to another counselor; 10) maintain current supervisee-supervisor relationship; and 11) supervisor speak with supervisee about ethical dilemma. The aforementioned actions are listed without regard to order of importance or preference and will be further discussed in step five when reviewing perceived efficacy and possible consequences.

Step #5: Consider the Possible Consequences of All Actions and Choose an Action

In this step, the team expands upon the list generated in step four and analyzes each listed item for possible consequences to discern the solution of best fit.

Refer to counseling services. In this scenario, it is suggested that both Sasha and

Hector seek personal counseling for their respective issues. Sasha would be advised to seek counseling for unresolved issues related to her disease process and possible clinical impairment (ACA, 2005, C.2.g.). Likewise, Hector would be advised to seek counseling for the issues of anxiety and depression referenced in the provided case scenario (ACA, 2005, C.2.g., F.5.d., F.8.b.). It is possible that while seeking counseling Sasha would abstain from her supervision duties, and Hector would need to postpone his practicum and internship classes in his course of study.

Request new faculty supervisor for supervisee. In this suggested course of action, Hector would be assigned a new faculty supervisor by the department. While assigning a new supervisor seems like a positive course of action at face value, it could have negative consequences for Hector. If the change of supervisor is not properly addressed with Hector, this could negatively affect his relationship with future supervisors. Although his reasoning for not wanting to continue with his client is not condoned in this profession, he is still involved in the learning process and this should be adequately explained to him (ACA, 2005, F.4.d.).

Consult. Consultation is an important step at the beginning of any decision-making process as it allows for the situation to be seen through a new lens and for new perspectives to be offered. The ethical codes pertaining to this case advise counselors to consult when any ethical dilemmas arise for them (ACA, 2005; ACES, 1993). It would be encouraged for both Hector and Sasha to seek consultation: Sasha from a professional colleague, and Hector from another university professor and/or clinician. The length of the consultation process varies and can be quite lengthy. If both parties are seeking consultation without making the on-site supervisor aware, the on-site supervisor could assume that the involved parties are doing nothing to address this issue. Also, every consultation does not end in an applicable solution, which could leave the involved parties still in contention over what should be done.

Gather more information. It is integral to any decision-making process to have as many details as possible available for review when choosing a course of action. Possessing knowledge of all viewpoints and priorities of all parties involved will lead to making an informed decision that can be viewed by all as beneficial. A review of legal and ethical codes for all parties involved is also an important step in this decision-making process. A conversation should be held with Hector and a third party faculty member to provide insight into Hector's view of the situation and to inform Hector of ethical and legal codes that are applicable to the situation. At a separate meeting the same conversation could take place with Sasha and the dean of the counseling department.

Leave of absence for supervisee. The University could propose a leave of absence for Hector, or Hector himself could request a leave of absence. In both scenarios the purpose of the leave of absence would be to give Hector time to sort through personal complications that are negatively affecting his studies and his ability to develop counseling relationships. If Hector is asked to take a leave of absence by the faculty, this could affect fidelity in his future relationships with faculty and staff at this university. If asked to begin his leave of absence immediately, this could have a negative impact on any client relationships he is currently forming. Regardless of which party instigates the leave of absence, there is always the chance that Hector will not take advantage of the time to work on personal issues and will return to the program in the same state in which he left it.

Propose a remediation plan for supervisee. University faculty, Sasha, and Hector's on-site supervisor could meet to jointly outline and then implement a remediation plan for Hector as he continues his practicum course. This could be very beneficial as it involves collective feedback from all parties. The plan would then be reviewed with Hector. Because of the inherent power differential that occurs when multiple supervisors are involved, care would need to be taken to ensure that Hector understands the purpose and intentions of the proposed remediation plan (ACA, 2005, F.9., F.9.b.).

Supervisor to take leave of absence from her role as supervisor. Sasha could take a leave of absence from her duties as supervisor to allow her to work on personal issues and conflicts that arose as part of her duties as a supervisor. This course of action may be decided by Sasha or the university. Some sort of checks and balances system would have to be implemented so that the university could confirm that during her absence Sasha did, in fact, address issues of importance before she returns to supervisor role. This could provide a needed break for Sasha to reflect, but could also serve to strain her relationship with the university.

Supervisor needs to evaluate relationship with supervisee in terms of counselor versus supervisor. In the scenario, Hector has presented with problems of anxiety and depression and his supervisor, Sasha, has offered to help him to cope (ACA, 2005, F.5.c). Before adding that layer to their relationship, Sasha must first decide if it is within the bounds of an ethically appropriate supervisor/supervisee relationship or if it will cross boundaries and develop into a counselor/client relationship which is not an appropriate element of supervision (ACA, 2005, F.3.a, F.3.e.). It is proposed that Egan's three stage Skilled Helper model for ethical decision-making be implemented at this juncture (Herlihy & Corey, 2006). Each stage in Egan's model includes a corresponding question. The questions, listed in order of consideration, are as follows: 1) What is going on?; 2) What do I want instead?; 3) How might I get what I want? (Egan, 2007). To follow this three stage model in a counseling relationship, the therapist would first explore the client's problems followed by stages two and three which provide for establishing goals and taking action to resolve problems (Herlihy & Corey, 2006). Stage one is seen as appropriate for the supervisor/supervisee relationship, but entering into stage two and three crosses the line into a counseling relationship at which point the supervisee should be referred to someone other than their acting supervisor for counseling (Herlihy & Corey, 2006). If the distinction between dual relationships is not made, further ethical complications could arise (ACA, 2005, F.5.a.)

Request new counselor for supervisee's client. A possible course of action would be to remove Hector from the counseling relationship with the client in question and replace him with a new counselor, as originally decided by Hector and agreed to by Sasha. Removing Hector from the counseling relationship would stop any transfer of Hector's negative belief system to his client who is young, impressionable, and struggling with this issue. Three possible negative consequences could arise from this course of action. First, Hector might get the impression from this transfer that it is acceptable to let personal beliefs affect counseling relationships (ACA, 2005, A.11.b., F.8.b). Second, Hector may lose an opportunity to gain needed professional skills. Third, if client is referred to another counselor immediately after disclosing information of this nature it could negatively affect the client's self esteem in addition to fidelity and rapport in future

counseling relationships into which the client may enter.

Maintain current supervisor/supervisee relationship. A possible course of action is to keep the current relationship as it is. This could create a negative relationship with Hector's site supervisor if he feels issues are not being properly addressed within the university and ultimately it could lose Hector his practicum location.

Supervisor speaks with supervisee about ethical dilemma. Another possible option is for Sasha to speak with Hector about the dilemma that just occurred and share her thoughts about the situation in which they find themselves. This could be beneficial in that it allows both of them to consider the roles each of them played that contributed to the ethical dilemma. However, it could have a negative effect on Hector and Sasha's supervisor relationship if the conversation is not handled appropriately.

It is recommended that the following steps be taken, in the order listed, resolving each step before proceeding to the next and proceeding to the next step only if it is deemed a necessary course of action: 1) Gather additional information from all involved parties; 2) Education regarding professional and ethical standards for Hector; 3) Consultation for Sasha with faculty members; 4) Design and implement a remediation plan for Hector with input from faculty, site supervisor, Hector, and Sasha; 5) Refer Hector to counseling for his stated issues regarding anxiety and depression; 6) Refer Sasha to counseling services for unresolved issues related to her disease process and possible clinical impairment; 7) Suggest a leave of absence for Sasha from her role as supervisor; 8) Assign a new supervisor for Hector.

Step #6: Evaluate the Selected Course of Action

In this section, the measures taken in the course of action previously listed will be combined and evaluated to identify the efficacy of the plan.

Gather more information from all involved parties. In this scenario, it seems as if the site supervisor has decided that Sasha has acted in an unethical manner by agreeing with Hector's decision to transfer his client who identifies as homosexual to another counselor. In doing so, the site supervisor has complied with the *ACA Code* to take appropriate action when unethical behavior is suspected (ACA, 2005, H.2.a.). In accordance with this code, it would be advantageous for Sasha and the site supervisor to meet and discuss their differing opinions regarding the situation with Hector. She should also meet with Hector to identify and/or confirm his reasons for proposing the transfer. If Hector should maintain his stance on the issue, Sasha should continue to the next step and attempt to further educate Hector.

Education regarding professional and ethical standards for Hector. As a counselor-in-training, Hector is responsible for understanding and abiding by the *ACA Code* and has "the same obligation to clients as those required of professional counselors" (ACA, 2005, F.8.a). As stated in section C.5. of the *ACA Code*, "counselors do not condone or engage in discrimination based on [...] sexual orientation" (ACA, 2005). It is also expected that counselors are aware of their personal values and beliefs and strive to avoid imposing them on clients (ACA, 2005). In the event that Hector is unaware of, or is blatantly disregarding these guidelines, the responsibility would then fall on Sasha to attempt to confront Hector on his errors.

As Hector's supervisor in this scenario, Sasha has an ethical obligation to adhere to *ACA Code section F.4.c.* in making supervisees "aware of professional and ethical

standards” because he has shown a deficit in his ethical decision-making skills. This would also be an appropriate time for Sasha to discuss with Hector the concerns she has for him regarding his mental and emotional state and the limitations she sees within him as a counselor-in-training. In addition to this, boundaries between supervisors and supervisees could be addressed at this time since it does not seem that this has occurred before (ACA, 2005). However, due to the apparent lapse in judgment that Sasha exhibits in maintaining appropriate boundaries with her supervisee, this may or may not occur. Regardless of the product of this conversation between her and Hector, Sasha would need to look to the next step and consult with her colleagues.

Consultation for Sasha with faculty members. *ACA Code of Ethics C.2.e.* states that “counselors take reasonable steps to consult with other counselors or related professionals when they have questions regarding their ethical obligations or professional practice” (ACA, 2005). Because this site supervisor has indicated that an ethical misstep has occurred, Sasha would hopefully identify a need for consultation immediately. Because of her positions as a counselor educator and a supervisor within an educational program, fellow faculty would be an ideal group from whom to draw consultation, as well as the dean of the university counseling department, since she/he was to be informed of the dilemma. This is also suggested because some faculty members have already verbalized their concern about Hector’s mental and physical state affecting his counseling ability.

In this meeting, decisions need to be made to address Hector’s limitations in counseling and his decision to disregard his ethical obligations to his client. Sasha’s role in this dilemma would also need to be addressed. According to section C.2.g. of the *ACA Code*, counselors are supposed to be aware of their own signs of impairment. When this does not occur, the responsibility then falls to counseling colleagues to address the issue with the counselor or supervisor (ACA, 2005). Because of this, it would be important for the other faculty members to identify signs of impairment within Sasha’s role as a supervisor, address them with her in a professional manner, and identify a course of action for Sasha, as well as for Hector.

Design and implement a remediation plan for Hector that includes suggested counseling services. Because the primary concern is for clients (ACA, 2005), a plan of action would need to be considered for Hector immediately in the event that he did not gain insight from his meeting with Sasha. It would be unethical for Sasha as his supervisor to endorse Hector as fit to continue in his practicum (ACA, 2005; ACES, 1993). According to Dufrene and Henderson (2009), once traditional means of education on skills and professionalism have been applied and have been deemed unsuccessful, a plan of remediation would need to be considered. Sasha would need to consult with the other faculty members, the site supervisor, and Hector to determine the remediation plan that would be most beneficial for him. If Hector was to refuse the remediation plan, this would likely mean dismissal from the program. Counseling would also be recommended in order to aid Hector in his personal struggles. If he were to accept it, Sasha would be responsible for helping him find the appropriate resources.

Individual counseling and leave of absence from supervision suggested for Sasha. Since her return to supervising, Sasha seems to have struggled in her compliance with ethical guidelines (ACA, 2005; ACES, 1993). In this scenario, the boundary lines of her professional supervisory relationship with Hector seem unclear. She feels a

connection to Hector, possibly due to the fact that they both share a similar experience of a diagnosis of cancer, and she feels that she can help him through this tough time. However, as a supervisor and a counselor educator, it is important for her to be able to address the areas of weakness that Hector exhibits (ACA, 2005, F.5.b.).

One reason that most likely contributes to this oversight is that Sasha has not made an attempt to “clearly define and maintain ethical professional, personal, and social relationships” with Hector, her supervisee (ACA, 2005, F.3.a.). When Hector discussed feelings of anxiety and depression with Sasha, it would have been in his best interest for her to suggest counseling, as it would not be ethical for her to provide both supervision and counseling services (ACA, 2005, F.5.c.). Nevertheless, she offered “informally” to work with him with no indication that she accounted for the possible drawbacks or documented the rationale for this decision (ACA, 2005, F.3.e.). She has also had difficulty identifying her own signs of impairment (ACA, 2005, C.2.g.), which led to the unclear boundary lines and her approval of Hector’s decision to no longer see his client based on discriminatory motives. Because of this, it would be in the best interest of her supervisees and the clients they see to implement a leave of absence from supervising for Sasha incorporated with counseling services to address personal issues related to her bout with breast cancer. Once Sasha resigns from her supervisory role, a new faculty supervisor will be assigned to Hector.

Step #7: Implement the Course of Action

In the final step of the ethical decision-making model suggested by Forester-Miller and Davis (1996), the course of action is implemented. Each stage of the course of action within step six of the model was tested for justice, publicity, and universality as Stadler (1986) suggested and Forester-Miller and Davis (1996) endorsed. Although there may be other options available to manage the dilemma, this method was chosen in the best interest of all involved. Hector may have some difficulty accepting the plan at first, but hopefully he would be able to see the benefits of an appropriate remediation plan. Sasha may also have some difficulty with the decisions made. All being well, she could see the benefits of these decisions for Hector and for herself.

Conclusion

In the current scenario, Sasha and Hector were challenged with numerous ethical dilemmas. The doctoral team at the University of New Orleans processed these dilemmas using the Forester-Miller and Davis Ethical Decision-Making Model (1996). Within the context of this model, the team outlined the ethical dilemmas and possible courses of action giving consideration to pertinent legal, ethical, and moral codes in addition to best possible outcome for all involved parties. The layered complexity of the ethical decision-making process was evident as the team worked through each step of the chosen ethical decision-making model. Each step was analyzed with consideration given to supervisor/supervisee relationship and counselor/client relationship. In addition, all proposed steps were suggested in the context of best practices. The team did their best to maintain ethical integrity throughout the process of analyzing the given scenario. The team recognizes the evolving nature of ethics and the issues that arise within the profession and advocates for continued study that contributes to the body of knowledge and ultimately benefits the profession.

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