CHAPTER 3

Practice Values, Principles and Ethics

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CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Argue the importance of ethics in case management.
- Identify some of the elements of ethical practice in case management.
- Discuss some sources of ethical tensions in case management.
- Critically introduce three key practice principles in this book’s approach to case management for community practice, including:
  - a client-centred approach
  - a relationships-based approach
  - a strengths-based approach.
- Discuss some tools to guide case managers towards becoming active, ethical decision makers.

Introduction

Case management is a term and a strategy that has become dominant in human service provision across a huge range of target populations and diverse practice settings (Stainton 2007). While case management is practiced from community care of the elderly to prison populations, with an accompanying range of different approaches, the diversity is narrowed somewhat in this book, with its main focus on case management in community practice. Over the last forty years case management has become so prevalent that Mosley (1997) claims it ‘reflects some of the most important developments in the human services area’ (p. 3). One common thread weaving through the apparent diversity is that the people targeted for case management services are primarily those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, people who are relatively powerless in their own lives and who have complex needs (Mosley 1997; ACCSA & CMSA 2006).

Despite the enormous range of case management approaches and contexts, there is also broad agreement in the literature about the functions that make up case management (Rothman & Sager 1998; Gursansky et al. 2003; Bigby 2007). Explained in detail by Heather Barton in Chapter 5, these functions are also discussed here by several other authors.

In this chapter the term ‘case management’ follows the definition used by the Case Management Society of Australia (CMSA):

> Case Management is a collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation and advocacy for options and services to meet an individual’s health needs through communication and available resources to promote quality cost-effective outcomes (ACCSA & CMSA 2006, p. 5).

In their discussion of case management, ACCSA and CMSA (2006, p. 7) argue that what distinguishes case management in community practice from other forms of care is the complexity of the individual’s care needs that are being addressed. Thus case managers focus on ‘the full range of health and social care needs of individuals with complex care needs’ (ACCSA & CMSA 2006, p. 7). This means that case managers work across many boundaries, including with many different people and several domains of a person’s life. Often this involves helping make life decisions that other people take for granted, so that the complexity of the work can go unnoticed.

Case managers don’t simply consider single individuals as a ‘case’ to be managed, as could be inferred from the CMSA’s definition and discussion of case management outlined above. Indeed, several chapters in this book argue that the term ‘case’ or ‘client’ can include several people—a couple or a family, for example—and that all these people’s needs, which will sometimes seem incompatible, may have to be considered if case management is to be successful. Consider the following case study.

Case study 3.1: The Thompson family: dilemmas of risk and intervention

Mrs Beth Thompson, who is eighty years old and widowed from her husband Anthony Thompson, lives with her daughter Irene who is forty-five. Irene has an intellectual disability and has lived with her parents all her life. The Thompsons moved to a coastal town when Anthony retired and left his farm to their son
The texture of the mud is to be carefully inspected. Any irregularities in the texture or appearance of the mud should be noted and reported immediately. If the mud is found to be too wet or too dry, adjustments to the mixing process may be necessary. The temperature of the work area should be monitored to ensure a suitable environment for optimal results. The finished product should be allowed to set properly before further construction activities commence. Additional instructions or guidelines may be provided by the project manager or supervisor. It is important to follow all safety protocols and procedures to prevent accidents and ensure a safe working environment.
What is ethics?

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the question of what constitutes right and wrong actions. It is concerned with the moral values and principles that govern human behavior. Ethics is important in the field of management because it helps professionals make ethical decisions in their work. The principles of ethics can be applied to various aspects of management, such as decision making, leadership, and interpersonal relations. Understanding and practicing ethics can help managers build trust, maintain integrity, and foster positive relationships with stakeholders.

In addition to ethics, professionalism and organizational values are also important in management. Professionalism refers to the standards of conduct and performance expected of managers in their roles. Organizational values are the beliefs and principles that guide the behavior of individuals within an organization. These values can include things like honesty, integrity, and respect for others. By upholding these values, managers can create a positive work environment and build a reputation for excellence.

In summary, ethics, professionalism, and organizational values are all key components of effective management. By incorporating these principles into their work, managers can make informed and ethical decisions, build strong relationships with stakeholders, and create a positive work environment.

Why is ethics important in case management?

Ethics is important in case management because it helps managers make decisions that are not only legally sound but also morally and socially responsible. Case managers work with vulnerable populations, and they have a responsibility to act in their best interests. By following ethical guidelines, case managers can ensure that their actions are fair, just, and respectful. This can help build trust and confidence among clients, colleagues, and the community. Additionally, ethical decision-making can help prevent legal and professional consequences that may arise from unethical behavior.
Principles of Practice

Is there a shared ethics for case management?

4. Non-misrepresentation—The obligation to avoid causing harm to others.

3. Justice—The application of fairness in the distribution of benefits and risks.

2. Respect for persons—Providing respectful and appropriate treatment.

1. Respect for persons—The obligation to provide benefits of good and to enhance the decision-making capacity and dignity of individuals.

These principles are foundational in the field of case management and are critical in ensuring that case managers act ethically and responsibly in their work.

Principles of Practice

On the bottom, the text continues to discuss the importance of maintaining a shared set of ethical principles in the practice of case management.

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Note: The image contains a mix of text and graphics. The text on the left side of the page is related to ethical principles, while the text on the right side deals with the role of case managers in society.

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Footnotes:


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References:


Ethical principles in case management

It is possible to develop a broad base of ethical principles in case management which could be developed as a foundation for professional practice. These principles are based on the core values of justice, respect, trust, and beneficence, and are intended to guide practitioners in their work with clients. The principles are intended to provide a framework for decision-making that is consistent with the best interests of the client and the goals of the case management program. The principles are intended to be flexible and adaptable to the unique needs of each case and to the specific circumstances in which the case management program is operating.
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Empowerment through a strengths-based approach

Programs and approaches used to improve client outcomes, success, and satisfaction require attention to the full spectrum of strengths, skills, and capacities of the client. The key focus is on understanding the client’s capabilities and capacities, as well as their strengths, resources, and potential for growth. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the client’s perspective and actively involving them in the planning and implementation of services. It also highlights the significance of building partnerships with clients and fostering a collaborative relationship. The strengths-based approach encourages clients to identify their own strengths, resources, and potential for growth, thereby enhancing their self-efficacy and empowering them to take an active role in achieving their goals. This approach is particularly effective in promoting client engagement, satisfaction, and overall success.
CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 2: Practicing Ethical Decision Making

Case study 3: Practicing Ethical Decision Making

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An important decision in ethical decision making is the point at which it occurs. This point is crucial because it may influence the context in which ethical decision making occurs. This chapter provides practical guidance for ethical decision-making in various contexts. It discusses the importance of considering ethical principles and values in decision-making processes. The chapter also highlights the role of leadership and management in fostering an ethical culture within organizations.

Question:

Why is ethical decision-making important in organizations?

Ethical decision-making is crucial in organizations because it impacts the reputation, trust, and overall success of the business. Ethical leaders set the tone for the organization and promote a culture of integrity and responsibility. This, in turn, helps organizations meet stakeholder expectations and operate within legal and ethical frameworks. Additionally, ethical decision-making can lead to increased employee morale and productivity, as employees feel valued and respected.

Reflections and Practice:

The leaders and employees are focused on the ethical environment within the organization. What kind of structure could a leader manager adopt to ensure that?

In what kind of organizations could a management adopt to ensure that?

The leadership and management should prioritize ethical decision-making and encourage a culture where ethical principles are integral to decision-making processes. It is important for leaders to be role models and demonstrate ethical behavior in their actions and decisions. Communication and transparency are key components of ethical leadership.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, ethical decision-making is a crucial aspect of leadership and management. By adopting ethical practices, organizations can foster a positive workplace culture, enhance stakeholder trust, and contribute to the broader social good. Leaders and managers must continue to prioritize ethical decision-making and encourage their teams to do the same, ensuring that ethical principles guide business operations at all levels.
References

Electroinc Resources

Reflective Questions
Chapter 2: Practice Theories, Frameworks, and Ethics

Case Management: A High-Ranked Environment

The core of Case Management: A High-Ranked Environment is the importance of Case Management and Social Work Practice, focusing on the role of Case Managers in providing support and assistance to clients in complex and challenging situations.


The book emphasizes the role of Case Managers in facilitating change and improving outcomes for clients. It covers topics such as assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation, providing a comprehensive guide for those working in the field of Case Management.

Key themes include the importance of client-centered practice, the role of interdisciplinary teams, and the need for Case Managers to be well-equipped with skills in problem-solving, decision-making, and communication.

The book is a valuable resource for students, practitioners, and educators in the field of Case Management, offering both theoretical perspectives and practical guidance.

Citations:


These works provide a solid foundation for understanding the principles and practices of Case Management and its implications for Social Work Practice.