

OVC Model Ethical Standards for Serving Victims and Survivors of Crime

SECTION I: Scope of Services

ETHICAL STANDARD 1.1: The victim assistance provider understands his or her legal responsibilities, limitations, and the implications of his/her actions within the service delivery setting, and performs duties in accord with laws, regulations, policies, and legislated rights of persons served.

ETHICAL STANDARD 1.2: The victim assistance provider accurately represents his or her professional title, qualifications, and/or credentials in relationships with persons served and in public advertising.

ETHICAL STANDARD 1.3: The victim assistance provider maintains a high standard of professional conduct.

ETHICAL STANDARD 1.4: The victim assistance provider achieves and maintains a high level of professional competence.

ETHICAL STANDARD 1.5: The victim assistance provider who provides a service for a fee informs a person served about the fee at the initial session or meeting.

SECTION II: Coordinating within the Community

ETHICAL STANDARD 2.1: The victim assistance provider conducts relationships with colleagues and other professionals in such a way as to promote mutual respect, confidence, and improvement of services.

ETHICAL STANDARD 2.2: The victim assistance provider shares knowledge and encourages proficiency in victim assistance among colleagues and other professionals.

ETHICAL STANDARD 2.3: The victim assistance provider serves the public interest by contributing to the improvement of systems that impact victims of crime.

SECTION III: Direct Services

ETHICAL STANDARD 3.1: The victim assistance provider respects and attempts to protect the victim's civil rights.

ETHICAL STANDARD 3.2: The victim assistance provider recognizes the interests of the person served as a primary responsibility.

ETHICAL STANDARD 3.3: The victim assistance provider refrains from behaviors that communicate victim blame, suspicion regarding victim accounts of the crime, condemnation for past behavior, or other judgmental, anti-victim sentiments.

ETHICAL STANDARD 3.4: The victim assistance provider respects the victim's right to self-determination.

ETHICAL STANDARD 3.5: The victim assistance provider preserves the confidentiality of information provided by the person served or acquired from other sources before, during, and after the course of the professional relationship.

ETHICAL STANDARD 3.6: The victim assistance provider avoids conflicts of interest and discloses any possible conflict to the program or person served as well as to prospective programs or persons served.

ETHICAL STANDARD 3.7: The victim assistance provider does not engage in personal relationships with persons served that exploit professional trust or that could impair the victim assistance provider's objectivity and professional judgment.

ETHICAL STANDARD 3.8: The victim assistance provider does not discriminate against a victim/survivor and does not turn victims/survivors away from services due to personal biases or lack of cultural competency.

ETHICAL STANDARD 3.9: The victim assistance provider furnishes opportunities for colleagues to access services if/when these colleagues become victims of crime or trauma.

SECTION IV: Privacy, Confidentiality, Data Security, and Assistive Technology

ETHICAL STANDARD 4.1: The victim assistance provider protects the privacy of the person served, adhering to the highest applicable standard of privacy.

ETHICAL STANDARD 4.2: The victim assistance provider preserves the confidentiality of information provided by the person served or acquired from other sources before, during, and after the course of the professional relationship.

ETHICAL STANDARD 4.3: The victim assistance provider makes good-faith efforts to ensure that services are accessible, suitable, and secure for clients from a variety of personal backgrounds.

SECTION V: Administration and Evaluation

ETHICAL STANDARD 5.1: The victim assistance provider reports to appropriate authorities the conduct of any colleague or other professional (including self) that constitutes mistreatment of a person served or brings the profession into dishonor.

The Decisionmaking Process

1. Assess the facts. Review all relevant documents and legislation. Verify all sources of information.
2. Identify relevant standards and practical considerations. What ethical standards and corresponding practical considerations are in conflict?
3. Brainstorm at least three courses of action and consequences of each.
4. Consult your peers or your supervisor.
5. Choose the best option and act.
6. Evaluate: How can this situation be avoided in the future?

1. Teresa and Mandy

Teresa works at a local domestic violence shelter. She has taken a couple of counseling classes but has no formal training as a therapist or mental health professional. She has recently gained the trust of Mandy, a client who was abused as a child and has recently left an emotionally and physically abusive relationship. Teresa soon realizes that Mandy has serious mental health issues and needs additional therapy. Mandy expresses a deep-seated mistrust of “shrinks” because she became sexually involved with one therapist 10 years ago. The relationship did not last and she felt betrayed.

Ethical Standards Involved:

Describe three courses of action and consider the pros and cons for each option:

1.

2.

3.

Consult your peers or your supervisor.

Chosen course of action:

Lessons learned: how can this situation be avoided in the future?

2. Carolyn and Grassroots Groups

Carolyn, who is white, has a large grant to provide assistance to the five culturally and ethnically diverse populations that have started grassroots homicide survivor groups in the city. Her role as a strategic planner/victim assistance provider is to help them assess their needs as an organization, to assist them in applying for not-for-profit status, and to help them become self-sufficient as support groups for survivors. Carolyn believes that she is color blind – that race and culture are not factors in her job. However, many of the members of the grassroots groups feel that she does not understand them. Over a period of months they have been increasingly frustrated by her stereotypical views about their cultures. When they ask her to bring in interpreters and members of their own communities to assist her, she replies that the money will be better spent hiring lawyers to secure the not-for-profit status.

Ethical Standards Involved:

Describe three courses of action and consider the pros and cons for each option:

1.

2.

3.

Consult your peers or your supervisor.

Chosen course of action:

Lessons learned: how can this situation be avoided in the future?