Slide 1

CDP CENTER FOR DEPLOYMENT PSYCHOLOGY
Preparing Professionals to Support Warriors and Families

Slide 2

Ethical Considerations for Working with Military Members and Veterans

Center for Deployment Psychology

Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

Slide 3

Disclaimer

The views expressed are those of the presenters and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

Slide 4

Learning Objectives

1. Define ethics as it relates to the role of the mental health provider.
2. Identify five (5) ethical challenges common to mental health providers working with the military population.
3. Discuss Gottlieb's model for avoiding dual relationships.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the ethical decision making process through interactive discussion of military case examples during the presentation.

Objectives

- Define ethics

- Discuss the decision making-process and strategic models

- Describe some common ethical challenges facing those working with the military and veterans

- Examine ways the APA Ethics Code may conflict with law and/or policy.

- Practice discussion of decision-making process for civilians working with service members and veterans

Why Ethics?

We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly.

> *- Aristotle, 384-322 B.C., Greek philosopher and scientist, student to Plato*

Even the most rational approach to ethics is defenseless if there isn't the will to do what is right.

> *- Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Author, winner of the 1970 Nobel Prize for Literature*

You WILL be exposed to ethical dilemmas

Questions about Ethics

Values are like fingerprints. Nobody's are the same, but you leave 'em all over everything you do.
— *Elvis Presley*

(DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jasmine Sheard, U.S. Navy/Released)

What are Ethics?

U.S. Navy photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Tiffini Jones Vanderwyst/Released

Ethics?

Merriam Webster's Dictionary offers the following definitions

Ethics:
1. A treatise on morals. 2. The science of moral duty; broadly, the science of ideal human character. 3. Moral principles, quality, or practice.

Ethical:
1. Of or relating to moral action, motive, or character; also, treating of morals, or ethics. 2. Conforming to professional standards of conduct.

But as an action…
- Thinking about reasons in terms of values in a manner that is open to public scrutiny

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Ethics

- Therapists must integrate their personal ethical and value traditions with psychology's

- Two major variables:

  1) Maintenance refers to the degree that we retain the ethical and value traditions of our culture of origin

  2) Contact and participation refers to the degree to which new psychologists adopt the traditions, norms, values of their new professional culture

Handelsman et al (2005) in Gottlieb et al (2008)

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Ethics Standards Are Not Enough

Principle ethics*:* Obligations to consider when deciding "what to do."

Virtue ethics: Ideals to consider when deciding "who shall I be?"

Principle A: "Psychologists strive to benefit those they serve and take care to avoid harm."

Never let your sense of morals prevent you from doing what's right.
— *Isaac Asimov*

Meara et al (1996)

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Ethics Standards Are Not Enough

A Psychologist with virtues and principles is one who is:
- Motivated to do good
- Possesses vision and discernment
- Emotionally intelligent
- Self-aware
- Appreciates and respects community mores in decision-making

You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him.
— *James D. Miles*

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Ethics Continued: Profession Specific

•General Principles: are considered aspirational in nature and are intended to be considered when confronting ethical dilemma's

•Ethical Standards: are purposely written broadly to apply to psychologists in varied roles and the particular application of a standard can vary depending on the context

•Ethics must be practical:

➢ "Every clinician is unique – every client is unique."

➢ "Ethics that are out of touch with the practicalities of clinical work… are useless."

Pope & Vasquez (1998) in Barnett et al (2007)

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What is it?

Ethical Dilemma

An ethical dilemma is a situation in which conforming to professional standards of conduct creates a need to make a choice between equally unsatisfactory alternatives. This often results from a discrepancy between professional ethics and law or institutional policy.

Ethical Conflict

For an ethical–legal discrepancy to become a conflict, the provider's obligations under the law and the provider's obligations under his or her professional code of ethics must be mutually exclusive.

Johnson et al (2010), pg. 549

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Conflict: DoD Policy and APA Ethics Code

Psychologists in a military setting face challenges with informed consent:

• Military mission
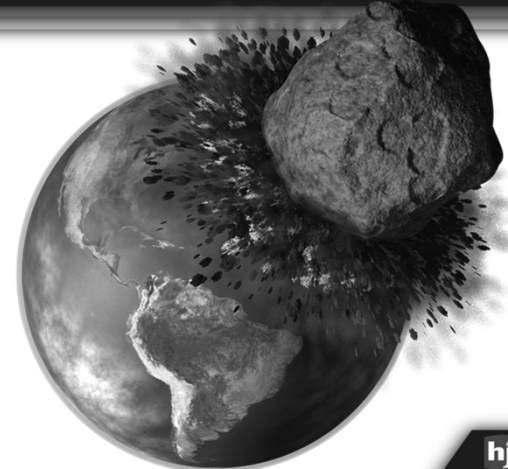• Who is the client?
• The impact on the SM's career

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Strategic Model for Managing Ethical Concerns

"Hope is not a plan"

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Forensic Psychology
Ethical Decision Making Model

1. Identify the problem
2. Consider the significance of the context and setting
3. Identify and utilize ethical and legal resources
4. Consider personal beliefs and values
5. Develop possible solutions to the problem
6. Consider the potential consequences of various solutions
7. Choose and implement a course of action
8. Assess the outcome and implement changes as needed

Bush et al (2006)

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Considerations for Discussion

I.   Boundaries of Competence

II. Informed Consent

III. Disposition Driven Diagnosis

IV. Multiple Relationships

V.   Professional's Own Fitness

American Psychological Association (2010)

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I. Boundaries of Competence

•This is a unique population with its own cultural identity. Is the therapist aware of this culture?

•Is the therapist trained to treat problems and disorders common to military members and veterans?

•Standard 2.01 (Boundaries of Comp.)

•Standard 2.02 (Emergencies)

American Psychological Association (2010)

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Boundaries of Competence

• Military Culture
  – Language
  – Demographics
  – Rank and organizational structure
  – Manners and normative behaviors
  – Beliefs, mission, and values

Luby (2012), Reger et al (2008)

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Increase Military Cultural Competency

I. Make a Self Inventory
II. Adapt Care to Military Culture
III. Attend Military Activities
IV. Increase Off-Post Social Support

I. Exposure to Military Culture
II. Training on Military Regulations
III. Training Through Observation

Luby (2012), Reger et al (2008)

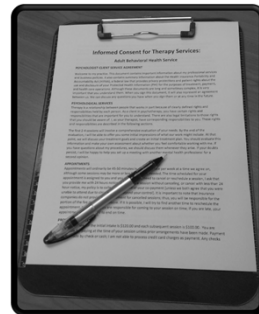**Boundaries of Competence:**
The Marine
Case #1
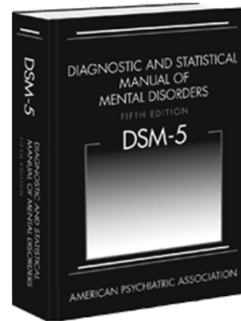

II. Informed Consent

Informed Consent:
The National Guard Student
Case #2

III. Disposition Drives Diagnosis

Problems with Administratively Driven Diagnoses

"Psychologists base the opinions contained in their recommendations, reports, and diagnostic evaluative statements on information and techniques sufficient to substantiate their findings."

APA (2010)

Problems with Administratively Driven Diagnoses

- The "psychologist as administrative broker" role can have unintended consequences for service members.

  ➤ Can perpetuate view of psychologists and mental health diagnosis as imprecise and psychiatric disorders as meaningless or silly.

  ➤ Can also can lead to increased stigma for seeking treatment and devaluing of psychological services

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Problems with Administratively Driven Diagnoses

We are ethically obligated to provide correct diagnosis no matter how the chips fall…

  ➤ "My wife says she will leave me/I will lose my job if I have to deploy again."

  ➤ "I have to go home right now to save my marriage."

  ➤ "Is it really MDD?"

Hot-Button Issues

- Can create lots of tension between the patient and the military with conflicting goals for each side
- Can be popular diagnoses that get lots of attention in the media and may be misunderstood or stereotyped in popular culture

Hot-Button Issues

- Substance abuse
- PTSD
- Suicidal behavior
- Who is the client
- Implications of diagnoses
- How do you balance the following:
  - Potential secondary gain
  - Stigma
  - Barriers to care
  - Confidentiality

Disposition Drives Diagnosis:
"Off the Record"
Case #3

IV. Multiple Relationships

•Military members can often present opportunities to create dual relationship.

•You must approach them carefully and thoughtfully.

Multiple Relationships

Multiple Relationships occur when a psychologist:

- Has more than one role with a client
- Has a relationship with a person closely associated with the client
- Is likely to enter into another relationship with the client in the future

American Psychological Association (2010)

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Gottlieb's Five-Step Model for Avoiding Dual Relationships

Step 1. Assess the current relationship according to three dimensions:

1. Power of provider in the relationship
2. Duration of the existing relationship
3. Termination is clearly defined and definitive

Step 2. Look at the contemplated (dual) relationship from the three dimensions.

If these three dimensions are all high, the relationship should be avoided because there is risk for harm (high therapist power, long term relationship and no clear/specified termination).

Gottlieb (1993)

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Gottlieb's Five-Step Model for Avoiding Dual Relationships

Step 3. When the three dimensions fall in the mid-range, examine both relationships for incompatible roles.

Step 4. Obtain consultation from a colleague.

Step 5. Discuss the decision with the consumer/patient.

Dual relationships may be even more complicated for military providers working at a military treatment facility

Gottlieb (1993)

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Multiple Relationships:
Petty Officer 3rd Class
Case #4

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Professional's Own Fitness
Personal Problems & Conflicts

Standard 2.06

- Psychologists refrain from activities when they know or should know that there is a substantial likelihood that their personal problems will prevent them from performing their work-related activities in a competent manner.

- When impaired, they take appropriate measures to obtain professional help and determine whether they should limit or suspend practice.

American Psychological Association (2010)

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Professional's Own Fitness
Personal Problems & Conflicts

- Exposed to stories of human suffering, war and death

- Accountable to engage in self-assessment

- Accountable to seek assistance

- Accountable to scrutinize the fitness of colleagues

- Any difficulties here?

hjf 38

Professional's Own Fitness:
Skipping Lunch and Scrambling
Case #5

hjf 39

A Reminder

- Standard 1.02: Conflicts between Ethics and Law, Regulations, or other Governing Authority.

    If psychologist's ethical responsibilities conflict with law, regulations, etc., psychologists make known their commitment to the Ethics Code…If the conflict is irresolvable, psychologists **may** adhere to the requirements of the law…

Remember to be vigilant of self and other providers to ensure ethical and safe practice.

American Psychological Association (2010)

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Key Points

Examine several models for anticipating and responding to ethical dilemmas:

- •Utilize a structured decision making model
- •Talk to peers/colleagues
- •Have a list of experts for consultation
- •Document discussions & actions
- •Be mindful of behavioral drift
- •Decision-making in ethics always involves a process
    - •This process involves thinking about values
- •Good law, good ethics, and good clinical care go hand-in-hand
- •Never worry alone

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Summary

- •Personal/professional ethics
- •The decision-making process
- •Strategies for anticipating and responding to ethical dilemmas
- •Ethical dilemmas encountered by clinicians working with military members and veterans
- •How the APA Ethics Code may conflict with DoD regulations, law and/or policy

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CDP Website: Deploymentpsych.org

Features include:

- Descriptions and schedules of upcoming training events

- Blog updated daily with a range of relevant content

- Articles by subject matter experts related to deployment psychology, including PTSD, mTBI, depression, and insomnia

- Other resources and information for behavioral health providers

- Links to CDP's Facebook page and Twitter feed

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Online Learning

The following online courses are located on the CDP's website at:
Deploymentpsych.org/training/online-courses
NOTE: All of these courses can be taken for free or for CE Credits for a fee

- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for PTSD in Veterans and Military Personnel (1.25 CE Credits)
- Prolonged Exposure Therapy for PTSD in Veterans and Military Personnel (1.25 CE Credits)
- Epidemiology of PTSD in Veterans: Working with Service Members and Veterans with PTSD (1.5 CE Credits)
- Provider Resiliency and Self-Care: An Ethical Issue (1 CE Credit)
- Military Cultural Competence (1.25 CE Credits)
- The Impact of Deployment and Combat Stress on Families and Children, Part 1 (2.25 CE Credits)
- The Impact of Deployment and Combat Stress on Families and Children, Part 2 (1.75 CE Credits)
- The Fundamentals of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) (1.5 CE Credits)
- Identification, Prevention, & Treatment of Suicidal Behavior in Service Members & Veterans (2.25 CE Credits)
- Depression in Service Members and Veterans (1.25 CE Credits)

All of these courses and several others are contained in the Serving Our Veterans Behavioral Health Certificate program, which also includes 20+ hours of Continuing Education Credits for $350.
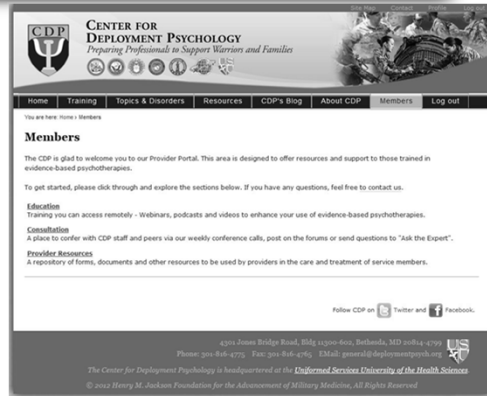
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Provider Support

CDP's "Provider Portal" is exclusively for individuals trained by the CDP in evidence-based psychotherapies (e.g., CPT, PE, and CBT-I)

Features cover topics including:
- Consultation message boards
- Hosted consultation calls
- Printable fact-sheets, manuals, handouts, and other materials
- FAQs and one-on-one interaction with answers from SMEs
- Videos, webinars, and other multimedia training aids

Participants in CDP's evidence-based training will automatically receive an email instructing them how to activate their user name and access the "Provider Portal" section at Deploymentpsych.org.

How to Contact Us

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