



**North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW)**  
PO Box 121; Botsford, CT 06404 \*\*\* Phone/Fax (tollfree): 888.426.4712  
Email: [info@nacsW.org](mailto:info@nacsW.org) \*\*\* Website: <http://www.nacsW.org>

*"A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work"*

**DEVELOPING AN ORGANIZATIONAL CODE OF ETHICS IN A  
FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION**

**By: Sr. M. Vincentia Joseph, Ph.D., LICSW, LCSW-C &  
Sr. Ann Patrick Conrad, Ph.D., LICSW, LCSW-C**

**Presented at:  
NACSW Convention 2009  
October, 2009  
Indianapolis, IN**

# DEVELOPING AN ORGANIZATIONAL CODE OF ETHICS IN A FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION

Purpose, Process and Product

# Presented by:

Sr. M. Vincentia Joseph, Ph.D., LICSW, LCSW-C  
and  
Sr. Ann Patrick Conrad, Ph.D., LICSW, LCSW-C  
The Catholic University of America  
Washington, D.C.

October , 2009

North American Association of Christian Social Workers

# Purpose of Developing an Organizational Code

- Contemporary social service providers are working in a range of public, private, non-profit, for-profit and “hybrid” organizations that make use of a range of interdisciplinary staffing patterns. This may include lawyers, nurses, substance abuse specialists, accountants, human resource and development personnel, etc. Consequently, the professionals on staff adhere to varying codes of ethics/professional responsibility.

# Purpose cont'd

- The standards of one discipline may be in sharp contrast with the standards of another code (eg. mandated reporting on part of lawyer vs. social worker), or with the mission of the organization; (eg. moral standard of practice of a faith-based organizations vs. public standards reflected in the law).

# Purpose cont'd

- The organizational mission and values present clients/consumers with a broad understanding of what they can expect from the organization and should be discussed at the initiation of a service contract.

# Purpose cont'd

- Increasingly, organizations are turning to organizational codes of ethics as a tool for unifying interdisciplinary activity within an organization and as a statement of professional responsibility available to clients/consumers and to the public.

## Purpose cont'd

- National membership organizations such as The Independent Sector are encouraging non-profits to take proactive action in developing Codes as a way to assure quality service delivery and to offset the need for legal jurisdictions to legislate on matters that may be better left to the prudential judgment of professionals (eg. HIPAA).

# Purpose cont'd

- Research with for-profit business organizations shows that there is greater work satisfaction and employee retention when there is:
  - A clear organizational mission and philosophy,
  - An organizational code of ethics that serves as a tool to coordinate the professional behavior of interdisciplinary staff,
  - An organizational climate that supports identification and discussion of ethical issues facing the organization, and
  - An explicit process for dealing with ethical dilemmas.

*Loe, T. W., et al. (2000). A review of empirical studies assessing ethical decision making in business. Journal of Business Ethics, 25: 185-204.*

# Purpose cont'd

- Increasingly, organizations are viewed as having a moral responsibility (eg. Enron scandal, current economic crisis).
- Ethics leadership in both for-profit and non-profit organizations is being seen as central to the role of the manager in assuring that staff members at all organizational levels—management as well as direct service providers—perform in an ethically responsible manner consistent with the mission of the organization.

# Summary of purpose:

Although a time-intensive process, support for development of an organizational Code comes from an:

- Organizational perspective
- Client/consumer perspective
- Public Policy perspective
- Ethical perspective

# An Evidence-Based Process Model for Developing an Organizational Code of Ethics

---

- The approach presented here is based on the presenters' experience of revising the Catholic Charities USA Code of Ethics
- CC-USA is a membership organization with an established track record of professional service provision since the early 1900s.
- CC-USA is among the largest faith-based non-profit service providers in the US.
- Is recognized as among the earliest US non-profits to develop an organizational Code (1983)

# A Snapshot of the Process

- In light of the emerging and complex issue in society and contemporary service delivery, it was decided by the Board of Directors and the CEO of CC-USA that the time was right to revise the previous Code.
- CEO appointed a task force made up of agency directors, persons who specialized in “mission effectiveness,” a lawyer, persons experienced in ethical reflection and analysis, and academics.
- The Task Force chose to undertake a web-based survey of the membership to learn about their use of the existing Code, the current issues they faced, and what elements they felt were needed in the Code.

# The Process cont'd

Respondents included:

- Participants from all nine (9) geographic regions in the organization's network;
- Persons who were:
  - Board members
  - Administrators and managers
  - Supervisors
  - Direct line staff including para-professionals
  - Volunteers

# The Process cont'd

**Survey findings** indicated that the Code needed to include:

- An explanation of the values and principles that underlie the Code. (For Catholic Charities this meant drawing from Catholic Social Teaching—which comes from Judeo-Christian Scripture, Encyclicals (the writings of the Church Fathers on social issues) and in the U.S. on the Statements of the Catholic Bishops (eg, : on the Economy, Poverty, Immigration, etc.)
- Further specification of standards for service delivery that are responsive to accreditation requirements and public laws.

# The Process cont'd

Additionally, findings indicated the need for:

- Greater attention to the process of disseminating the code through the member organizations;
- Discussion of the use and limitations of codes;
- Development of supplemental resources, such as ethical tools and guidelines
- Training at all levels of the organization to deal with today's complex ethical challenges that are not readily resolved through the use of a code.

# The Process cont'd

- Issues surfaced by the respondents included:
  - Client issues
  - Board/Governance Issues
  - CEO/Management Team Issues
  - Staff/Volunteer/Agency Responsibility Issues
  - Resource Development/ Funding Development Issues
  - Research/Metrics Issues

# The Process cont'd

- The Task Force members divided areas of responsibility based on their own experience and competencies and developed a draft document.
  - Client issues—direct practitioners
  - Board/Governance Issues—lawyer experienced in corporate law
  - CEO/Management Team Issues—agency directors
  - Staff/Volunteer/Agency Responsibility Issues—agency managers
  - Resource Development/ Funding Development Issues—consultation with HR and development personnel
  - Research/Metrics Issues—academic researchers

# Process cont'd

- Draft document was reviewed by the entire Task Force in a day-long face-to-face meeting resulting in modifications and revisions
- Reviewed by the CC-USA Board resulting in modifications and revisions
- Reviewed by an independent committee of Agency Directors (more revisions)
- Reviewed by Ethics and Theology Consultants (some clarifications and revisions)
- Reviewed by the entire membership using a web-based feedback survey (more clarifications and revisions)
- **Final product was approved in September 2007 by the Catholic Charities USA Board.**

# The Product (s)

- The Code of Ethics document
- Implementation Toolkit
- A plan for agency adoption by the various member agencies
- Ethics training for member agencies

# Catholic Charities U.S.A. Code of Ethics

Rooted in Scripture/Theological Foundations

Implementing Values and Principles of Catholic Social Thought  
and

**Applying Standards of Ethical Competence**

# Fundamental Values and Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*

## ■ Values

- Truth
- Freedom
- Justice
- Love

## ■ Principles

- Human Dignity
- Common Good
- Subsidiarity
- Solidarity with the Poor



# Responsibilities to Clients

- 1.01 Clients Rights
- 1.02 Dual Relationships/  
Boundary Issues
- 1.03 Beginning of Client  
Relationships
- 1.04 Informed Consent
- 1.05 Confidentiality
- 1.06 Clients as Research  
Subjects
- 1.07 Release of Information
- 1.08 Quality  
Service/Competence
- 1.09 Duty to Warn/Duty to  
Protect
- 1.10 Duty to Report
- 1.11 Best Interest of Client
- 1.12 Non Discrimination
- 1.13 Religious Identity
- 1.14 Cultural Sensitivity
- 1.15 Conflict of Interest
- 1.16 Standard for Service
- 1.17 Fees
- 1.18 Non-involvement of  
Clients in Colleague  
Conflicts
- 1.19 Referrals
- 1.20 Termination of Service

## 2. Boards/Governance

2.01 Corporate Integrity

2.02 Autonomy of Governance Board of Directors/Trustees

2.03 Fiduciary Duty

2.04 Relationships of the Corporation

# 3. CEO/Management Team Responsibilities

3.01 Ethics Leadership

3.02 Organizational Renewal and Development

3.03 Staff Competence

3.04 Technology

3.05 Board

Communications/Relationships

3.06 Alternative Sources of Revenue

# 4. Staff/Volunteer/Agency Relationships

- 4.01 Organization's Responsibility to Staff—Non-discrimination
- 4.02 Organization's Responsibility to Staff—Supervision
- 4.03 Responsibility of the Supervisor to the Organization/Administration
- 4.04 Mutual Responsibility of Organization and Staff
- 4.05 Staff Responsibility to Organization
- 4.06 Colleague Relationships
- 4.07 Team Relationships
- 4.08 Organization's Relationship to Volunteers

# 5. Societal Responsibility

5.01 Mission Engagement (outreach to community; engagement of community)

5.02 Staff Participation

5.03 Coalition-Building

5.04 Disaster Response

## 6. Resource Development/ Funding/Investments

6.01 Public and Private Contractors

6.02 Foundations/Corporations/Grant  
Making Bodies

6.03 Fundraising and Marketing  
Activities

6.04 Investments

# 7. Research

7.01 Responsibility to collaborate in research/evidence-based practice

7.02 Responsibility for ethical conduct of research

7.03 Protection of Human Subjects

7.04 Protection of private information contained in agency metrics

# Summary

In this session we have:

- reviewed the rationale for developing an organizational Code of Ethics;
- examined the steps taken in an evidence-based process model used to develop an organizational code; and
- overviewed the multiple dimensions of an organizational Code.

**Hopefully, the content will be applicable to your work now and in the future.**