

Ethical Dilemmas for Consideration in the Professionalism Competency

Keys to Reflection and Inquiry

Dilemma #1: Getting Back on Her Feet

On the first meeting of his evening child development course, Instructor Tom distributes a detailed syllabus which includes the focus of each class session, all assignments and deadlines, policies and expectations for grades. This semester the enrollment includes a wide range of students who are currently working in Head Start, private programs, and family child care. There are also a number of unemployed people and those seeking a change of careers. Tom believes he should be consistent and firm about his expectations and policies regarding grades. His workload is already heavy and he doesn't want any more stress in his life. As the last few weeks of the class approach, one of his students, Suzette, approaches him with the news that after getting evicted from her apartment, she and her 3 year old son are now living in her car. With all this stress she hasn't been able to keep up with her assignments and pleads with him to make an exception and not penalize her with a lower grade. Getting through school feels like her only hope of getting a job and back on her feet with a place to live.

Dilemma #2: Finding Another Way

As the new director of an early childhood program for low income families, Maria is learning more about different cultural groups in her community. For instance, among the 22 Somali families who have come to enroll their children in preschool, 19 have fathers who are independent taxi drivers. She discovers they don't have the necessary tax or income records required to document their eligibility for a subsidy. When Ali Omar Elmi and his wife come to enroll their daughter, Faduma immediately starts to explore all the interesting materials in the classroom while the adults talk. Maria doesn't want to turn them away and deny this opportunity to Faduma and her family, but if she's going to enroll this family, she has to find a way to meet the requirements.

Dilemma #3: Better Late than Never

Director Shirley was thrilled to hire Jerome, a bright and playful young man who is a joy to watch with children. She is also glad that he offers the children, families and other staff such a positive role model of an African American male. After three months on the job Jerome has started taking more early childhood classes and hopes to get his degree. He has also taken on a part time second job to help cover his expenses. Gradually Shirley recognizes that Jerome is starting to come to work late, throwing off their ratios, inconveniencing and irritating his co-workers. She's spoken to him about this several times but his tardiness continues and he is periodically calling in sick. Shirley now has to do something.