


Acting Out: Learning BACB Ethics through Interactive Teams



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Workshop Leader: Wayne Fuqua

- Professor and former Chair at Western Michigan University
- NSF grants on research ethics
- “Near miss” with unethical colleague
- Taught courses and workshops on ethics
- Michigan Autism Council, 2013-2016
- Consulting on autism service delivery
- WMU Autism Center of Excellence





Core Principles for BACB

- Do good, avoid doing harm
- Respect autonomy, accord dignity, promote self determination
- Be just— do not discriminate
- Be truthful
- Pursue excellence in practice and research
- Accept responsibility



BEHAVIOR ANALYST CERTIFICATION BOARD®

Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for Behavior Analysts

- **Challenging issues:**
- Rely on scientific knowledge
- Boundaries of competence
- Multiple relationships
- Confidentiality
- Promoting ethical behavior among colleagues
- Treatment efficacy and data
- FBA and other assessments
- Individualized plans
- Least restrictive Tx
- Supervision volume and competence

Acting Ethically: The behavioral repertoire

- Familiarity with BACB Professional Ethics and Compliance Code (PECC) (or other professional code of ethics)
- Commitment to adhere to PECC
- **Necessary but not sufficient**





The essential behavioral repertoire, continued

- Signal detection for ethical issues
- Intuitive/emotional reaction to ethical challenges— good start
- Recommend— discussion to prompt analysis of and critique action alternatives
- Plan, rehearse and implement solution
- Evaluate impact and recycle as needed
- Preventive steps including policy changes and dissemination
- Organizational contingencies to support ethical behavior and discourage violations



Informal resolution of ethics violations

- Resolve informally by bringing to attention of the individual, if doing so does not violate confidentiality rights
- Less to more intrusive intervention strategies
- Exceptions— severe violations, legal violations, when you need supplemental help to resolve a case
- Try to ameliorate harm and prevent further violations



Some suggestions for informal resolution of ethical lapses

- Do— schedule private time to talk, exceptions for safety?
- Do—describe facts and observations
- Do— listen actively and consider context
- Do try to understand the other person’s perspective: curiosity not blaming
- Do— give opportunity for explanation and remedial action, if appropriate
- Do-- request specific change & establish deadlines
- Do— be prepared to move to more intrusive interventions
- Do- emphasize shared goals (use “we” when possible)
- Do **NOT**— infer intentions, blame others, call names, use absolutes (always, never)-- that is fuel for arguments



Reporting ethical violations

- If informal resolution has not worked or is not appropriate
- If “substantial harm” has occurred or is likely to occur you may bypass the informal resolution process
- Verify facts
- Caution: Interpretation of “intentions, etc. from facts—prone to multiple perspectives
- First hand and second hand reports
- Report to local ethics committees, state licensing boards, institutional authorities and/or BACB
- Limits--violation of confidentiality



Guidelines: Using team based training to promote ethics

- Develop case studies, respecting confidentiality
- Team discussion: is this an ethical issue? Can it be resolved informally? Which ethical principles are relevant?
- Discussion ground rules— confidentiality, no punishment, constructive, problem solving perspective
- Identify and discuss the pros, cons of resolution options, less to more intrusive strategies
- Role plays to rehearse and refine a tactful but effective way to resolve this ethical dilemma.
- Other teams critique performance and offer or demonstrate improvements
- Develop strategies, policies to prevent future problems



Ethics Case Study #1

- **You've been providing ABA services for Jeremiah, a 4 year old diagnosed with autism. He has been making steady but slow progress on the development of verbal and academic skills. One day his mother approaches you and says, "I saw this fantastic show on TV about advances in autism treatment. They proved that the use of a special diet plus the placement of a stocking cap with magnets on a child's head can reprogram their brains and cure autism within months. I'd like to enroll Jeremiah in this therapy. What do you say?"**



Ethics Case Study #2

- **At your school you typically walk the children out to the covered parking area where their parents pick them up after school. One day you walk Samantha out to her mother's car and notice the distinct smell of alcohol when you open the door for Samantha. You ask her mother if she is OK— She says, "Sure, I've been watching basketball all afternoon with some friends and now I'm going to take Samantha to the zoo. It's a great day." What do you say or do??**



Ethics Case Study #3

- **You've been providing social skills and language training for Quinn, a 5 year old child on the autism spectrum. He has been making remarkable progress in initiating social interactions and talking appropriately. When you go to greet Quinn and his mother in the busy waiting room of your after school program, Quinn's mother nudges Quinn and he runs up to you saying Dr. Tom, I got you a Christmas present and hands you a small object that is wrapped, sloppily, in Christmas paper. What do you do/say?**



Ethics Case Study #4

- **You just obtained your BCBA credential and accepted a job at a growing autism services agency. Everything is great for 6 months but the agency director starts assigning more and more cases to you and the other 3 BCBA's in your agency. You get three new cases and you politely raise your concerns with your Director. She says, "we're trying to hire another BCBA but until we do you'll just need to take some shortcuts and be more efficient, like the other BCBA's. We can't turn away customers. And don't forget, this is a business and we exist to make a profit. That allows us to pay your salary." Now what??**
- **Complications— you signed a non-compete clause when you were hired**



Ethics Case Study #5

- **At your autism services agency it is common practice for some BCBAs to specialize in "younger" children and others to specialize in adolescents. Your office mate, Pat, a BCBA, has "inherited" one of your former clients, Nick, who is now 14. When you worked with Nick at a younger age, progress was slow partly because you had difficulty finding effective reinforcers. However, Nick seems to be making good progress with Pat. One day, Pat leave Nick's file on his desk in your shared office and you take a peek. You are surprised to see that Pat has arranged some unusual reinforcers for Nick, including access to porn and trips to a gun range. What do you do/say?**



Scenario Worksheet (Brief)

- Team #: _____
- Brief case description: _____
- Key Ethical Principles from PECC:
- Is this case appropriate for informal resolution?
Actor 1 _____ playing _____
- Actor 2 _____ playing _____
- Actor 3 _____ playing _____
- Actor 4 _____ playing _____
- Steps to prevent future occurrences?



Group activity #2

- Identify the top 5 ethical challenges that you encounter in your job
- Most frequent? Most risky? Most difficult to manage? Your choice.
- Display on large post it pad and explain to the group
- All groups vote on which ones are the “top five”