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Ethical Decision Making Model for ALA

Basic definitions:

values - beliefs which guide, direct and motivate opinions, attitudes, and actions.

ethics - the study of good and bad, of moral duty and moral obligations.

ethical standards - principles of conduct, how people ought to behave in a certain situation.

The Three Basic Ethical Theories and Tools Included in the Decision Model:

absolute values - this theory believes that there are certain ethical principles that are universal and that impose an absolute duty on a person. Kant referred to such duties as 'categorical imperatives' because they allow for no exception.

utilitarianism - this theory requires the ethical person to evaluate the likely consequences of contemplated conduct and weigh the good the act may produce against the harm it may cause. Simplified to 'the greatest good for the greatest number.'

stakeholder analysis - responsible ethical decisions involve considerations of the impact of the decision on the network of persons who have a 'stake' in the decision. Accordingly, a decision which does not take into account the way in which it may affect others is not ethical regardless of its actual consequences.

Strategy for Ethical Decision Making:

1. Define the problem carefully and make sure you have gathered all the necessary facts.
2. List all the stakeholders who may be affected by the decision (stakeholder analysis).
3. List all the personal and work related values that are involved in the decision (absolute value analysis). These values may include:
 - honesty** (truth telling, candidness, openness)
 - integrity** (act on convictions, courageous, advocacy, leadership by example),
 - promise keeping** (fulfilling the spirit of commitments),
 - fidelity** (loyalty, confidentiality)
 - fairness** (justice, equal treatment, diversity, independence)
 - caring** (compassion, kindness),
 - respect** (human dignity and uniqueness),
 - citizenship** (respect for law, social consciousness),
 - excellence** (quality of work),
 - accountability** (responsibility, independence).
4. List all the possible alternative actions that you could do (utilitarian analysis).
5. Choose and prioritize:
 - a. Which stakeholder do you believe is the most important in this situation
 - b. Which value do you believe is the highest value in this situation
 - c. Which of the likely consequences do you believe will cause the greatest good the least harmor
 - d. Prioritize a,b,c, as to which is the most important consideration in this situation.

6. Make the decision based on the above factors.
7. Design a strategy to implement the decision that will take into account the ethical values listed above.