Professional Ethics & Codes of Conduct

* **Ethical Decision Making: Case 3**

## Sana works in a large provincial agency dealing with alcoholism and drug abuse. Agency administers programs for individuals with alcohol and drug programs.

## Maintains a large database of information on clients who use agency services

## Some data files contain names and current addresses of clients.

## Sana has been asked to look at the track records of treatment programs.

## Reporting # of clients seen each month for past five years, length of client treatment, number of clients who return after program completion, criminal histories of clients.

## Sana has been given access to all files in the agency’s mainframe computer

## This data is needed to put together in the report.

## After assembling data:

## She downloads it to the computer in her office.

## The agency is pressuring her to finish report on the deadline.

## Sana decides she must work from home over the weekend.

## She copies data onto several disks and takes them home.

## After finishing report she leaves the disks at home and forgets about them.

* **Applying the Code: Case 3**

## Issues involving confidentiality

## Principle 1.7 deals with privacy

## Principle 1.8 deals with confidentiality

## Principle 2.8 also applies:

## Constraining access to authorized systems

## Principle 3.5:

## Organizational leaders have obligations to “verify systems are designed and implemented to protect personal privacy and enhance personal dignity”.

## Also Principle 3.3:

## (Appropriate and authorized uses of organization’s resources)

## Government agency should have had policies and procedures to protect identity of its clients

## Sana’s friends and relatives might accidentally discover files and inappropriate uses information.

## Note that the files Sana used did not need to have names or other information in the records.

## Agency should have removed identifying information from files Sana was allowed to use.

## If this happened, it wouldn’t have mattered that Sana copied files to her computer.

## Sana, unfortunately, was not attentive to ethical issues ahead of time.

* **Ethical decision making: Case 4**

## Computer Company is writing first part of an “efficient accounting system”.

## Will be used by government

## Expectation is that this will save taxpayers a considerable amount of money each year.

## Software engineer in charge of design assigns different parts of system to his staff.

## Reports, Internal Processing, User interface

## Manager is shown the system, and agrees it matches requirements. System is installed, but staff found the interface so difficult to use that their complaints are heard by upper-level management.

## Result of complaints:

## Upper-level management will not invest any more money in developing the new accounting system

## They go back to their original, more expensive system

* **Applying the Code: Case 4**

## This case highlights issues involving quality of professional work Code of Ethics advocates that:

## Professional strive to achieve the highest quality in both process and products (2.1)

## Principle 3.4: users and those affected by a system must have their needs clearly articulated

## Assumption in this case:

## Failure to deliver a quality product is directly attributable to failure to follow a quality process.

## Most likely the problems with interface could have been discovered in review process – peers or users (2.4)

## When harm results (in this case with taxpayers), failure to implement quality process clearly violates ethical behavior.

* **Ethical decision making: Case 5**

## Contractor is determining requirements for an employment agency.

## Client describes what is needed when displaying applications whose qualifications appear to match those for a particular job

## Client also further states that names of white applicants are to be displayed ahead of nonwhites

## Further states that names of male applicants are to be displayed ahead of female applicants

## Recall: ethical code asserts an ACM member will be “fair and take action not to discriminate”

* **Applying the Code: Case 5**

## This case highlights issues involving fairness and discrimination. In this case, system designer is asked to build a system that, it appears

## Will be used to favour white males and

## Discriminate against non-whites and females

## From this is would appear that:

## System designer should not do what he or she is told, plus

## Should also point out the problematic nature of what is being requested and ask client why this is being done

## Making the inquiry is consistent with 2.3, 2.5 and 4.1.

## If client answers that they plan to use information to favour white males, then:

## Computer professional should refuse to build the system as proposed.

## To go ahead and build the system would violate:

## 1.4 (fairness)

## 2.3 (respecting existing laws)

## It would also be inconsistent with:

## 1.1 (well-being)

## 1.2 (avoiding harm)

* **Ethical decision making: Case 6**

## A software development company has just produced a new software package.

## It incorporates new tax laws and prepares both individual and small business tax returns

## The president of the company knows that the program has a number of bugs

## He also believes the first firm to put this kind of software on the market is likely to capture the largest market share.

## The company widely advertises the package.

## When the product is shipped, it includes a disclaimer of responsibility for errors resulting from the use of the program.

## The company expects it will receive a number of complaints, queries, and suggestions for modification. The company plans to use these to make changes and eventually issue updated, improved and debugged versions. The president argues that this is general industry policy:

## “Anyone who buys version 1.0 of a program knows this and will take proper precautions.”

## Because of bugs, a number of users filed incorrect tax returns and were penalized by Rev Canada.

* **Applying the Code: Case 6**

## This case highlights issues involving legal liability for unreliable code. Software Company (and president in particular) violated several principles in the ACM code of ethics. Since he was aware of bugs in the product, he did not strive to achieve the highest quality (Principle 2.1). By failing to inform consumers about bugs to system, principle 2.5 was violated. Here the risks to users are so great they have to pay penalties for mistakes which result from the program.

## By law companies can make disclaimers only when they are in “good conscience” (Disclaimer does not meet legal test, violated principle 2.3)

## President also violates Principle 3.1