What Is/Are Ethics?

- Values - What is good and desirable (Teleological)
- Ethics - What is right & correct (Deontological)

Morals, Standards, and Laws

- Morals - Cultural &/or religious standards of behavior (Conventions)
  - Mores - Community Standards
  - Laws - Clearly-defined consequences

Informed Consent

- When evaluation or research participants are incapable of giving informed consent, social workers should provide an appropriate explanation to the participants, obtain the participants' assent to the extent they are able, and obtain written consent from an appropriate proxy.
  - Section 5.02(f), NASW Code of Ethics

Informed Consent

- Competence: the subject's ability to understand the implications of participation
- Non-Coercion: avoiding the use of coercion to obtain consent
- Full Information: a clear description of the procedure, benefits & risks, and possible adverse effects
- Comprehension: whether the individual actually understands

Competence

- The ability to understand not just the process, but the implications of the process.
- Persons lacking the capacity to make rational decisions may include:
  - young children
  - individuals in extreme emotional states
  - persons with acute or chronic cognitive deficits
  - intoxicated persons.
Non-Coercion

Avoiding the use of force, intimidation, or pressure to obtain consent. This does not rule out use of rewards for participation or attempts to persuade an individual to participate in a project. However, persuasion and/or reward may become coercive in situations where there is a large power differential between a researcher and a potential participant.

Full Information – Six Elements

- Procedures and Purposes
- Discomforts and Risks
- Benefits
- Alternative Procedures
- Answer Questions
- Freedom to Withdraw

Comprehension

Comprehension refers to whether the individual actually understands that to which he or she is consenting. Even fully competent individuals may not adequately understand the process and its implications. It is the responsibility of the researcher, not the subject, to ensure the subject understands the information.

Protection from Harm

Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should protect participants from unwarranted physical or mental distress, harm, danger, or deprivation.

Section 5.02(j), NASW Code of Ethics

General Ethical Principles

- Beneficence: maximizing good outcomes and minimizing harm
- Respect: protecting personal autonomy
- Justice: ensuring nonexploitative procedures

National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research

Norms of Scientific Research

- Valid Research Design: Ben., Resp.
- Competence of Researcher: Ben., Resp.
- Selection of Subjects: Ben., Resp., Jus.
Assessing Risk and Benefit

- Misconceptions and Limitations
  - A ratio is not actually computed
  - Some risks and benefits are not identifiable beforehand
  - It is not possible to consider all risks and benefits
  - Risk and benefit cannot be identified for each subject individually

What Is Research Risk?

- Inconvenience
- Physical Risk
- Psychological Risk
- Social Risk
- Economic Risk
- Legal Risk

What Is a Research Benefit?

- Valuable Relationships
- Knowledge or Education
- Material Resources
- Training, Employment, Advancement Opportunities
- Opportunity to do Good
- Empowerment
- Scientific/Clinical Outcomes

Aspects of Scientific Activity That May Involve Risk

- The Theory or Research Idea
- The Research Process
- The Institutional Setting
- The Uses of Research Findings

1. Theory or Research Idea

- Recognize that the Null Hypothesis may be true.
- Design the research so that opposing hypotheses are tested fairly.
- Remember that research findings are contingent knowledge.
- Consult with other researchers about flaws and alternative interpretations,

2. The Research Process

- Designing the Research
- Recruiting Subjects
- Obtaining Informed Consent
- Administering Treatments
- Gathering Data
- Debriefing
- Analyzing and Interpreting Results
3. The Institutional Setting

- Churches
- Clinics
- Communities
- Hospitals
- Prisons
- Professional Organizations
- Recreational Settings
- Retirement Homes
- Schools
- Service Organizations
- Workplaces

4. The Uses of Research Findings

- “Proven” ideas are very influential.
- In many cases research findings are regarded as established fact.
- However, research findings are not “proven” ideas.
- They are contingent knowledge.

Risk Related Factors In Social Research

- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Personal Safety and Well-Being
- Lack of Validity
- Deception and Debriefing
- Informed Consent
- Justice
- Ownership of Data
- Gatekeepers

Vulnerable Persons or Institutions

- Those Who Are Visible or Public
- Those Who Lack Resources or Autonomy
- Those Who Are Stigmatized
- Those Who Are Weakened or Institutionalized
- Those Who Cannot Speak for Themselves
- Those Engaged in Illegal Activities
- Those Damaged by Subjects' Revelations

Researcher’s Stance Toward Risk

- Aware of sources of risk
- Employ appropriate means to reduce risks
- Consult with those who can help them deal with risk
- Aware of own biases and alternative viewpoints
- Aware of limitations of findings
- Aware of how others may transform findings into dangerous generalizations