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Relias Spotlight Series

July 2022

Hello Providers,

Welcome to the Optum Idaho **July Relias Spotlight Series** – a series devoted to offering you access to **free, accessible and continuing education unit-eligible** online education about topics that are important to behavioral health providers.

In this month's Relias spotlight, we are going to be exploring ethics and how they influence our behavior and decision-making in both our personal and professional lives.

Ethics are best understood as a philosophical discipline, a code of conduct agreed and adopted by people that deal with right and wrong in human behavior and decision-making.

We have our personal and professional ethics that sets our standards of how we should live and interact with others. As behavioral health professionals, we belong to organizations that also require us to adhere to a code of ethics that provide guidelines in the understanding and accepted standard of behavior in any given situation while working within our respective roles.

In your career, you will undoubtedly face ethical dilemmas, and it is important to know and plan for how you will respond to different situations both personally and professionally.

Have you ever experienced any of the following ethical dilemmas?

- Submitting license renewals without having all the required CEU's
- Accepting a gift from a member
- Starting therapy with a member without informed consent
- Allowing a skilled staff to perform services to members even though they do not have the required license or certification
- Not having a set schedule with a member and allowing them to drop in whenever they want.
- Accepted a friend request on social media from a member
- Going to the same AA/NA meetings as member

While reading these ethical dilemmas, did you notice any thoughts come to mind? You may have thought of things like: "I would never"; "Well, maybe if it was..."; "Absolutely not"; "Above all else do no harm"; "Well we live in a small community"; or "They told me it was okay."

When we are faced with ethical dilemmas, especially when working in our professional capacities, it is our **individual** responsibility to ensure that we adhere to our professional code of ethics as well as the laws and regulations guiding our respective fields. Legal structures are created at the state or federal level by elected or appointed officials. The law does not dictate what is "ethical" or "right" in a particular situation, but rather what is "legal" or "illegal." As a behavioral health professional, we always need to be aware that certain kinds of conduct and actions, while not illegal, may be unethical. And, sometimes the law itself can be seen as falling short by our ethical standards.

At times, behavioral health professionals may need to simultaneously weigh the ethics and the legality of a given situation. They may even find that they themselves are breaking the law. For example, a counselor may feel it is ethical to disclose to a member's partner that the member is HIV positive even though the federal and state confidentiality laws prohibit the breach of this information. Federal laws and regulations will supersede state requirements; therefore, it is our individual responsibility to know and follow federal guidelines when working with our members.

The Relias trainings selected in this month's article were selected to provide individuals and organizations with timely knowledge and examples of ethical decision-making models, interactive vignettes and a deeper dive into some commonly shared principles of ethics such as autonomy, beneficence, justice, honesty, integrity, fidelity and nonmaleficence that will improve our understanding and ethical behavior in both our personal and professional lives.

If you would like more information and education around the topic of ethics, we encourage you to log into [Relias](#) and search for the following modules:

Applying Ethical Decision-Making in Clinical Practice	REL-BHC-0-AEDMCP
Ethics for Marriage and Family Therapists	REL-BHC-0-EMFT
Ethics for Substance Use Disorder Counselors	REL-BHC-0-ESUDC
Ethics for Counselors	REL-BHC-0-EPC
Ethical and Legal Guidelines for Telehealth Service Delivery	REL-BHC-0-ELGTSD
Boundary Risks for Behavioral Health Paraprofessionals	REL-BHC-0-BRBHP

Thank you again for the work that you do each day with our members so that Idaho can continue to improve access to behavioral health services. Optum Idaho is excited to offer these resources to you.

Sincerely,

The Optum Education and Training team