

Ethics Over Optics: Protecting Inclusivity in an Anti DEI Era

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CRC Ethics Codes – A.1, A.2 A.3, D.1

SW Ethics Codes – 1.05, 4.02, 6.04

Reminders: **What is DEI?**

- Diversity: Honoring the differences in race, ethnicity, ability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, and more.
- Equity: Ensuring fairness by recognizing and addressing systemic barriers and providing what each person needs to thrive.
- Inclusion: Creating environments where all people feel respected, supported, and valued.
- Belonging: The emotional outcome of equity and inclusion – where individuals feel they are a valued part of the whole.

Reminders: **What it is not**

- DEI is not political indoctrination – it is a framework for ethical care and access.
- DEI is not reverse discrimination – it is about removing barriers, not creating unfair advantages.
- DEI is not performative – when practiced authentically, it supports autonomy, dignity, and self-determination for all.
- DEI is not optional – when embedded in ethical practice, it's integral to inclusive service delivery.

Framing the Challenge

Project 2025: A broad blueprint for dismantling of inclusive infrastructure

Executive Order 14151: (January 20, 2025):
Suspended federal DEI programs

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (July 4, 2025): Cutbacks to Medicaid, student aid, gender affirming care

Reframing

This session offers:

- A trauma informed, ethics grounded lens for inclusive care.
- Reframing strategies using professional codes (NASW, ACA, CRC)
- Self determination and autonomy frameworks
- Ethical language for applicable use.

Self Determination Theory

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Human motivation relies on three basic psychological needs:

- Autonomy: the feeling you're choosing your behavior versus feeling controlled or compelled by others
- Competence: the feeling that you can be effective in the activity
- Relatedness: a feeling of connectedness and belonging with others

Trauma Informed Care

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Six Core Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness & Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration & Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice & Choice
6. Cultural, Historical & Gender Responsiveness

What Ethics Demand When Policy Doesn't Protect

- Do no harm (Nonmaleficence) – prioritize client safety (ACA A.1a)
- Promote justice & access – ensure equitable opportunities (NASW 6.04)
- Uphold autonomy & self determination – especially during transitions (Shogren et al., 2024; Dubois et al., 2022)

Reframe in Action

Scenerios

- 1) You work in a public high school. A new policy bans discussion of gender identity, even privately. A student approaches you in distress about their gender expression.
- 2) You're part of a hiring panel. Your supervisor suggests removing a candidate with a visible disability, saying "they'd never keep up."
- 3) Your agency is scaling back accommodations due to budget cuts. A long-time client with intellectual disabilities suddenly loses support for community access.

Reframing Language: From Triggers to Ethical Practice

- Cultural humility → respectful care (NASW 1.05)
- Anti racism → access fairness (NASW 6.04)
- Gender identity → trauma informed needs (ACA E.5.b)
- DEI initiative → barrier free client access (Dubois et al.)

Self Determination in Practice

- Adults use goal setting, refusal, advocacy (Sinclair)
- Early jobs = autonomy and resilience (Schutz)
- Motivation + autonomy = smoother transitions (Dubois)

Strategies for Protection in Practice

- Use ethics based documentation
- Cite autonomy, not ideology
- Align with Self Determination Theory goals and choice
- Reference labor transition framework (Du Toit)

References

- Du Toit et al., (2024) - Labor market frameworks
- Dubois et al., (2022) - Autonomy & Transitions
- Jetha et al., (2023) - Inclusive employment futures
- Schutz et al., (2023) - Youth employment
- Shogren et al., (2024) - Autonomy scaffolding
- Sinclair et al., (2024) - Autonomy in work
- American Counseling Association (ACA). (2014) Code of Ethics
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (2021) Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers
- Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) (2017) Code of Professional Ethics for Rehabilitation Counselors