**Colleague Megan post to week 4 discussion 1**

I am a counseling psychologist in a state prison. I have been counseling a new inmate and he confided in me that one of the other inmates has indicated he is considering suicide. He does not divulge the name of the other inmate and refuses to talk any further about the issue. The current problem is I have no name to identify the inmate considering suicide making timely intervention difficult. Ethically, I cannot ignore the fact that an inmate may be struggling with suicidal tendencies or thoughts.

            An alternative to consider would be to convince the inmate who told me about the inmate considering suicide, that telling me a name would be in the best interest of him and the inmate mentally hurting. Another alternative may be to go through cameras and find out which inmates the new inmate I am seeing has been talking to. Cameras could also show mannerisms and suicidal signs/tendencies (depression, anxiety, aggression). Records of inmates could be pulled to verify who has had something traumatic occur recently (a loss, current letters/information, court hearings with bad news, etc.), and who has a past of depression or suicide.

            One consequence that may arise is that the inmate that informed me of the inmate considering suicide may question my integrity as a psychologist. “Deception may be ethically justifiable to maximize benefits and minimize harm” in this situation (APA, 2017, Principle C). Leaving me the “obligation to consider the need for, the possible consequences of, and […] responsibility to correct any resulting mistrust or other harmful effects that arise from the use of such techniques” (APA, 2017, Principle C). Depending on how finding the inmate considering suicide goes, the new inmate I am seeing (who told me about the inmate considering suicide to begin with) might find it hard to trust in me in the future. He did not give me more information freely for a reason. Whether that reason be that he didn’t want the investigation of the other inmate lead back to him from the other inmate, or from other inmates, is something to consider. For this reason, building trust with this new inmate will prove important to helping pinpoint which inmate is struggling. More consequences might be that if the unidentified inmate considering suicide is not identified soon enough, he might commit suicide. Or if word gets out that he is trying to be identified, he might clam up and identifying him will be more difficult.

            Decision making is a part of our character (Oliveira, 2007). The decisions we make are based on our thoughts and reactions concerning the external world (Oliveira, 2007). The best way I can reduce bias in my decision-making process is to consider all possible courses of action. Then, “form expectations concerning future events” (Oliveira, 2007, p.12). Finally, I can “[reflect on] personal values and current goals” (Oliveira, 2007, p.12). Taking these three steps can help reduce bias in my decision-making process because I will be considering future aspects as well as looking at my inner self and the oaths I took to help.

Resources:

APA. (2017). Ethical principles of psychologists and Code of conduct. Washington, D.C. [https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/ethics-code-2017.pdf (Links to an external site.)](https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/ethics-code-2017.pdf)

Oliveira, A. (2007). Decision-Making theories and models: A discussion of rational and psychological decision-making theories and models: The search for a cultural-ethical decision-making model. Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies, 12(2). Retrieved from [http://ejbo.jyu.fi/ (Links to an external site.)](http://ejbo.jyu.fi/)