



EP 2.1.2

10.13

THE ETHICS OF MOONLIGHTING

The employment contract of the Bay City Human Services Agency states: "Social workers may not work for another employer in their professional social work capacity, even outside of their regular working hours." Every new social work employee in the agency is made aware of this provision and acknowledges her agreement to it in writing. The other evening, Ellen and Bill Stock rushed their infant daughter Sharon to the hospital because she had a very high fever. While Ellen stayed with the baby in the emergency room, Bill handled the admission routines.

Later on, Bill told Ellen that among the people with whom he had to speak in the admissions office was a social worker. He had been very impressed by her warm and sympathetic interest in their sick child. Ellen asked Bill if he recalled the worker's name and was surprised to learn that it was Joan Gilligan, one of the social workers she supervises. On the way out of the hospital, Ellen peeked into the admissions office to make sure that this was the same social worker she supervises. It was. Because Ellen did not use her husband's name at work, she was sure that Joan did not realize that she had been helping her supervisor's husband.

Ellen did not know what she should do about her discovery. On the one hand, Joan's moonlighting was in violation of the commitment she made to the agency. The Code of Ethics states clearly, "Social workers generally should adhere to commitments made to employers and employing organizations" (NASW Code, 2008, 3.09a). On the other hand, Joan's moonlighting did not harm anyone. As a matter of fact, her presence in the hospital admissions office benefits many patients at a time when they are in a state of crisis. What are Ellen's obligations to her employer, to her colleague, and to the profession? Are there other ways to address this dilemma, such as working to change the agency policy?

Exemplar 10.14 deals with yet another work-related issue. It will be difficult to differentiate between Wilma's administrative/supervisory responsibilities and her professional social work responsibilities. Any decision she will reach will necessarily include both aspects. Whatever her decision, it will have ethical implications.



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10.14

A CARIBBEAN CRUISE

Wilma Stevens supervises a unit of six social workers, of whom Carla Bick is the most qualified and most effective. Last week, Carla was not at work. Her boyfriend called in to say that Carla had a bad case of the flu and would probably be out all week. Today, she returned to work, bringing a note from her doctor stating that she had been sick all week. Aside from the note, there was no evidence of her having been sick. She explained that yesterday she went to the beach, and this accounted for her suntan. Wilma's cousin had been on a Caribbean cruise last week. When they had supper together, her cousin told Wilma all about the trip and about the many interesting people she met onboard the cruise ship. One of those people was a young social worker—Carla Bick. The cousin wondered whether Wilma happened to know her.