

Level I: First Three Questions

- Is this a right-versus-wrong situation? Is the issue simply that doing the “right” thing involves significant personal costs?
 - ➔ Ethics involves doing the right thing, regardless of the personal costs.
- Is this a situation where one course of action arguably conflicts with your legal obligations?
 - ➔ Do what the law requires
 - ➔ Remember, the law is only a minimum standard.
- Would you be embarrassed to read about your action in your local newspaper?

Level II: Additional Helpful Questions

- Which course of action will most build/preserve the general public’s confidence in your agency and your personal leadership?
- Which course of action is most consistent with your agency’s ethics code? (for more information about ethics codes, visit www.ilsg.org/trust)
- Which decision would your mother be most proud of you for making?

- Which decision would you prefer other people in your situation to make? What should be the common practice?
- Is one decision more consistent with the Golden Rule (do unto others as you would have others do unto you)?
- Are there stakeholders or other members of the public who should be invited to be part of the decision making process?

Level III: For More Complex Situations

Difficult situations typically involve competing sets of “right” values. When these situations arise, ask yourself:

- ➔ Which ethical values are in conflict (honesty, compassion, loyalty, responsibility, fairness, respect or some other value)?
- ➔ What are the facts? What are the benefits to be achieved or the harm to be avoided by a particular decision?



- ➔ What are your options?
Is one course of action most consistent with both sets of values? Is one course of action more consistent with a value that is particularly important to you?

For example:

- Does one decision involve keeping a promise or your word?
- Which decision best reflects your responsibility as an officeholder to serve the interests of the community as a whole?
- Is there a decision that does more good than harm?
- Which decision is most respectful of individual rights?

- Which decision is most fair?
- Which decision is most compassionate?
- Sometimes it is helpful to make a list of pros and cons or find a trusted, unbiased person to act as a sounding board.



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ETHICS
CHECKLIST:

Questions to Ask in Sticky Situations



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