

# **RISK ASSESSMENT FOR MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS**



**Philip G. Cooker, Ph.D.**

Chair, Ethics and Professional Affairs Committee

*MCA Institute for Leadership Training*

July 8, 2010

# **RISK ASSESSMENT**



Recent question: to consult or not?

# 2008 Program Overview

---

- **Orientation to Risk Management**
- **Assessing Risk**
- **Risk Management Strategies**
- **Case Illustrations**

# Program Overview Today

---

- Orientation to Risk Management
- **Assessing Risk**
- Risk Management Strategies
- Case Illustrations

# Effective and Safe Practice

---

- **Involves cost v benefit decisions**
- **Effective practice requires risk.**
- **Risk Management is based on ethical principles.**
- **Implement a program for managing risk.**

# Assumptions about Practice

Sternberg

- **You will make mistakes.**
- **You cannot help everyone.**
- **You will not know everything.**
- **You cannot go it alone.**
- **It is helpful to have a proper mix of confidence and humility.**

# Calculating Risk

APAIT

$$\mathbf{Risk} = \frac{\mathbf{CI \times C \times D}}{\mathbf{CF}}$$

**CI** = client risk characteristics

**C** = contextual risk factors

**D** = disciplinary consequences

**CF** = counselor factors

**“Risk”** relates to risk to your clients and your practice.

# Counselor Factors

*Essentially means:*  
**COMPETENCY**

# Key Points: Competence

---

- **Competency: knowledge, skills, and emotional competence**
- **Competence can vary depending on other factors.**
- **Strive to become multiculturally competent.**
- **New areas of practice require training and supervision.**

# The other factors:

---

- **CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS**
- **CONTEXTUAL RISK FACTORS**
- **DISCIPLINARY CONSEQUENCES**

# The other factors:

---

- **CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS**

- What are characteristics of “high-risk clients?”
- Should we not work with such clients?
- How can we decrease risk when working with such clients?

# The other factors:

---

- **CONTEXTUAL RISK FACTORS**
  - Practice setting
  - Type of services offered
  - Supervised practice (vicarious liability)
  - Multiple clients (families, couples)
  - Dual relationship (even beneficial ones)

# The other factors:

---

- **DISCIPLINARY CONSEQUENCES**
  - Proactive (gatekeepers in training programs)
  - Reactive (licensing boards; courts)
  - What is the worst that could happen?
  - Will I be perceived as fulfilling my fiduciary role as a counselor, therapist, consultant, etc.?

# Applying Factors

---

Back to the question:  
*To consult or not to consult?*

# Assessing Risk

$$\mathbf{Risk} = \frac{\mathbf{CI \times C \times D}}{\mathbf{CF}}$$

**CI = client risk characteristics**

**C = context**

**D = disciplinary consequences**

**CF = counselor factors**

# Risk Management Strategies for Every Counselor

---

- **informed consent**
- **documentation**
- **consultation**

For more information:

---

[cooker@olemiss.edu](mailto:cooker@olemiss.edu)

Members of the committee