

# **Guidelines for Resolving Ethical Conflicts at the Sciencenter**

The Code of Ethics describes a series of duties that we agree to accept as members, employees, and volunteers of the Sciencenter. Situations can arise, however, in which duties conflict and where the Code of Ethics provides little guidance. These guidelines provide a procedure for making decisions when ethical duties conflict with one another.

## **SUMMARY OF STEPS**

- Identify the stakeholders
- Identify the values
- Establish the facts
- Generate options
- Weigh the importance of trade-offs
- Apply perspective tests to the preferred option:  
seek additional values and options
- Obtain feedback, evaluate your decision, and correct

# Guidelines for Resolving Ethical Conflicts at the Sciencenter

## **Step 1. Identify the stakeholders.**

Identify everyone affected by the decision and consider their perspectives. Involve these stakeholders and consult others, where possible or appropriate.

## **Step 2. Identify the values.**

Identify the issues related to values, including values relating to the duty to act responsibly. What rights are associated with the best-case scenario? What harm is associated with the worst-case scenario?

## **Step 3. Establish the facts.**

Identify the level of certainty for conditions surrounding the situation. Often, it is possible to classify information according to:

- **Guess**
- **Opinion**
- **Judgment**
- **Fact**

Try to get as close to "fact" as possible.

## **Step 4. Generate options.**

Try to resolve ethical conflicts by creating options in keeping with the important values. Look for win-win solutions where one value is not abandoned entirely in favor of another.

### **Step 5. Weigh the importance of trade-offs.**

When trade-offs must be made, weigh the options in terms of their consequences, taking into account:

- magnitude of impact
- number of people impacted
- duration of impact

Then consider the relevant duties or responsibilities of the individuals involved.

### **Step 6. Apply perspective tests to preferred option.**

Apply the following tests to the preferred option. If any of these tests suggests a value, fact, or option not yet considered, cycle back to the appropriate step above.

- **Reciprocity:** Would I be willing to have this done to me or my institution?
- **Universality:** Would it be appropriate for everyone to choose as I have chosen?
- **Publicity:** Would I be willing to have my choice made public?
- **Defensibility:** Would I be able to justify my decision to others?
- **Responsibility:** Would I be willing to take responsibility for this decision no matter what the outcome?
- **Legacy:** Would I be willing for my descendants to live with the consequences of this decision?
- **Intuition:** Does this decision "feel" right?

### **Step 7. Get feedback, evaluate your decision, and correct.**

Determine whether the effects of your decision turn out to be as anticipated. If not, take corrective action.

*(Adapted and modified by C. Trautmann from the Oregon Ethics Commons)*