

Case scenario #2

A court case involving a therapist's refusal to counsel homosexual clients

1: The problem in this case scenario is that Bruff (the therapist) refused to counsel her client, Jane Doe, after she revealed she is a lesbian and would like to explore her relationship with her partner. Bruff referred her client to another therapist for this reason because it goes against her religious beliefs. According to the ACA Code of ethics, Section C Professional Responsibility, C.5. Nondiscrimination: "Counselors do not condone or engage in discrimination against prospective or current clients, students, employees, supervisees, or research participants based on age, culture, disability, ethnicity, race, religion, spirituality, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital/partnership status, language preference, socioeconomic status, immigration status, or any basis proscribed by law." In this case, Bruff is discriminating against her client Jane Doe because of her sexual orientation. This is illegal according to the ACA Code of Ethics.

2: Potential issues involved: Bruff was dismissed by her employer and was offered other options but she refused to accept them and was eventually terminated. Bruff faced legal actions as well as risking putting her client in emotional turmoil for rejecting to continue to counsel her after she revealed her sexual orientation. Jane Doe's rights as a client were violated by her therapist, who was supposed to put her own worldview aside to counsel her client with the utmost professionalism. Her therapist failed her as a clinician and may have damaged her image of therapists in the future.

3: My values are consistent with the code of ethics relating to nondiscrimination.

4: Know the applicable laws and regulations: According to (Corey, et al. 2015) "A counselor who refuses to work with LGBT clients can cause harm to them. The refusal to work on a LGBT client's relationship issue constitutes discrimination, which is illegal (p. 131)

5: Obtain Consultation: I would consult with the necessary people in my workplace to guide me on my decision to either counsel or not counsel this client. I would trust their guidance and try my best to look at the big picture and what could happen if I were to discontinue with this client and the negative/positive effects that may come from my decision.

6: Consider possible and probable courses of action. I would counsel this client regardless of my beliefs if I know it is illegal not to.

7: enumerate the consequences of various decisions. If I was this client's counselor, I personally wouldn't have a conflict about her decision to pursue a lesbian relationship/partnership. I am of the Christian faith and I have many friends who have partners, etc. I would be able to embrace this client and counsel her

accordingly. I actually have more of a conflict with the church's discrimination against this population of people than I do with the population itself. If I continued to counsel this client after she told me her wish to pursue her relationship with another woman, and I did not make her feel any discrimination, she could benefit much, feel much relief, and maybe even feel confident and comfortable enough to come out to her family members as well (if she has not done so already). If I chose not to counsel her because of my own feelings against her decision, this could be detrimental to her well-being, and could cause much damage not only to her, but to her family as well. If her family found out what happened during her therapy session if she was to be turned away because of what she revealed about her sexual orientation, this can cause for a lawsuit against me as the therapist and cause much stress.

8: Choose what appears to be the best course of action: According to the text book, it is important to emphasize the importance for counselors to develop nonjudgmental and accepting attitudes, regardless of their own value system. Counselors who discriminate based on sexual orientation are violating ethical standards. If I was this therapist and experienced her struggles counseling this client, I would talk it over with my supervisor before jumping to the conclusion of referring my client to someone else right away and violating the ACA code of ethics. I would use this as an opportunity to grow as a counselor and explore myself further and deeper.