Teaching Ethical Decision-Making to Healthcare Interpreters

Guest Speaker: Cynthia E. Roat, MPH

Webinar Workgroup Hosts: Erin Rosales & Rachel Herring

March 22, 2013

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Housekeeping

- This session is being recorded
- Audio and technical problems
- Questions to organizers ("Chat")
- Q & A
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• Mentoring Program
• Support for Trainers of Interpreters in Languages of Limited Diffusion
• Webinar Series
Welcome!

Guest Speaker:

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH

“... one of the nation’s premier authorities on language access in health care.”
Teaching Ethical Decision-Making to Healthcare Interpreters

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
for the NCIHC
Home for Trainers
March 2013
Goals for this workshop

- Clarify what ethics are and why they are important to interpreters.
- Review the National Code of Ethics for Healthcare Interpreters.
- Share some techniques for teaching ethical decision-making in short, medium, or longer courses.

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
What are “ethics?”

A principle of right or good conduct.
- The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language

The principles of conduct governing an individual or a group.
- Merriam-Webster.com
Ethics reflect values

- Beneficence
- Fidelity
- Respect for the importance of culture and cultural differences

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
How to use ethics: an evolution

- To begin, a list of rules to be followed
- As we grow, a guide to decision-making

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
Rules vs. guidelines

**Ethics as rules**
- Reflects a view of interpreting as a technical profession.
- Focuses on learning the rules.
- Less useful to practicing interpreters, but a necessary starting point?

**Ethics as guidelines**
- Reflects a view of interpreting as a practice profession.
- Focuses on learning the principles behind the rules and how to apply them.
- More useful to practicing interpreters, but takes time to develop professional judgment.

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
Example: Confidentiality

- What is the rule?
  "Interpreters treat as confidential, within the treating team, all information learned in the performance of their professional duties, while observing relevant requirements regarding disclosure."

- What is the purpose of the rule?

- How can the rule be applied?
Ethical Dilemmas

- These occur when two canons of the Code of Ethics seem to guide the interpreter to two mutually exclusive courses of action.
  Example: Provider speaks and asks the interpreter not to interpret. Accuracy or respect?

- Or when following a canon of the Code seems to violate one of the values behind the Code.
  Example: Interpreter knows critical health information not shared with the provider.

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
Resolving ethical dilemmas

- Requires an understanding of the principle behind the canon.

- There are often multiple possible resolutions.
Teaching ethical decision-making

How you teach depends on:

- **Your group**: how experienced are they?

- **Your agenda**: how much time do you have?

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
Teaching ethical decision-making, one hour

1. Introduce the concept of ethics.
2. Read the canons of the National Code of Ethics.
3. Apply to straightforward sample situations.

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
Teaching ethical decision-making, four hours

1. Introduce the concept of ethics.

2. Break into small groups and have each group
   a) read a canon of the National Code of Ethics,
   b) explain the canon in their own words, and
   c) provide an example of how the canon could be applied.

3. Debrief in a large group.

4. Provide escalating ethical dilemmas. Which canon(s) apply? Provide clear answers.

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
Teaching ethical decision-making, eight hours

1. Introduce the concept of ethics.

2. Break into small groups and have each group:
   a) read a canon of the National Code of Ethics,
   b) decide what the principle is underlying this canon; what it is trying to accomplish; what its purpose is, and
   c) provide an example of how the canon could be applied.

3. Debrief in a large group.


Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
Brainstorm options. Analyze consequences.

Intervened, but should not have

Intervened appropriately

Did not intervene, but should have


Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
Brainstorm and analysis

- What could you do?
- What ELSE could you do? And what else?
- What are reasonable positive outcomes of each option? How likely are they?
- What are the reasonable negative outcomes of each option? How likely are they?
Let’s look at an example

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
Boundaries

1. The canon:

The interpreter maintains the boundaries of the professional role, refraining from personal involvement.

2. What is the principle underlying this canon? What is it trying to accomplish?

3. Example
Boundaries, cont’d

4. Dilemmas

- Provide escalating ethical dilemmas.
- Which canon(s) apply?
- Brainstorm options.
- Analyze consequences.
Summary

- Ethics guide professional behavior.
- A study of the Code of Ethics is most useful if understanding of the canons is followed by:
  1. discussion of underlying principles,
  2. concrete examples
  3. consideration of dilemmas focusing on options and analysis of likely outcomes.

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH
Discussion and Questions

Cynthia E. Roat, MPH

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Announcements

- Future events
- Session Evaluation
- Follow up via email

TrainersWebinars@ncihc.org
Thank you!

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