Ethical Dilemmas

**ED #1:** You have been working with a family for the past year regarding family reintegration. The parents have had significant challenges with poverty, addiction, and general family dysfunction. During your time with them you have supported the kids and the parents as they work through the various challenges. At one point you noticed that mom had a history of quilt making that had fallen away given the other more pressing challenges she had been facing. As she has gotten more stable, gotten sober, and addressed her past trauma, she had picked quilting back up. You have encouraged her and even helped find her a quilting group that has acted as an emotional support. You have just had the hearing where your recommendation was for reunification and the judge agreed. The children are set to be returned to mom and dad in the coming week. When you do your last in home inspection, mom presents you with a large beautiful quilt that she has made for you. It is an absolutely lovely gift and clearly took significant time and financial recourses to complete. Using the NASW Code of Ethics and the Ethical Screen what do you do and why?

**ED #2:** You are a social worker working with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. You have been working with a woman who has significant symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia. She is also 6 months pregnant. She is lucid enough to know that she does not want to keep the child but rather wants to put the child up for adoption. As a result of her pregnancy she is unable to take any medication for her illness. Additionally she is homeless and has been living in a homeless shelter. As her illness has gotten worse over the course of the pregnancy, she is yelling out racial slurs in the shelter. She is a white woman living in a predominantly black area of town. The shelter manager calls and tells you that she is in danger given her current symptom. You discuss the issue with your client and suggest that she commit herself for the remainder of the pregnancy. She is adamantly opposed to doing so saying that she has a right to do whatever she wants so long as she is not hurting herself or others. In all other aspects she is taking care of herself and her pregnancy. You are now faced with the possibility of involuntarily committing her for the remainder of her pregnancy. Using the NASW Code of Ethics and the Ethical Screen what do you do and why?

**ED #3:** You are a program director at a local non-profit serving individuals with mental illness. You supervise 10 people from therapist to case workers. One of the therapists, Jonathan, you have known since grad school. You have always admired his skill with individuals, his insight, and frankly you just like him. In grad school you knew him to be extremely outgoing and the life of the party. He has brought that same fun and engaging energy to his work over the years. Lately you have noticed that he is calling in sick more often and when he is in, he is more reserved and his attitude towards clients has shifted. You have heard him say things like “sometimes these people make their own problems and just expect us to fix them.” You are also getting feedback from some of his co-workers that he is hard to work with and one person said she thought that he smelled like “booze” on more than one occasion. Recently on an evening out with your friends you ran into Jonathan at a local tavern. He was severely intoxicated. When he saw you, he became angry and said, “well there goes a good time tonight!” It has also been brought to your attention by another staff member that they “wonder if Johnathan is hanging out with clients after work? I mean probably, not right? But he just seems to be kind of chummy with client X. But I am sure I am wrong.” You have supervision with Johnathan set for the following day. Using the NASW Code of Ethics and the Ethical Screen what do you do and why?

**ED #4:** You are a social worker in a prison. You have been working with a group of inmates who have grown to trust you. While you work for the prison your ethics of confidentiality still apply. Although the administration has told you that it would be “beneficial to everyone” if you reported any suspected illegal activity in the prison. Additionally, the warden has reminded you that while he doesn’t require a corrections officer to be in the room with you during group, he could. It is a privilege that you get to meet with the inmates alone. During a particularly productive group session several of the group members disclose that they are using drugs that are being sold in the facility. They will not disclose who is selling the drugs but rather wanted to discuss how they are still struggling with addiction. Using the NASW Code of Ethics and the Ethical Screen what do you do and why?

**ED #5:** Your agency has a clear policy that you are not to accept friend requests by clients nor are you to request to be their friends on social media. You have begun working with an individual who is struggling with addiction. One afternoon while scrolling through your FB feed you notice that a friend of yours has posted a picture of herself with some other friends you don’t know and they have been out drinking and having a great time. You immediately recognize the client you have been working with as one of your friends friends. While you are not friends with the client it is clear that that she is peripherally a part of your social circle. Your friend has invited you to her housewarming party through FB. You haven’t seen her in a while and are really looking forward to seeing her and her family as well as her new home. As you are looking through the invitation list you notice that your client is on the list and has accepted the invitation. Using the NASW Code of Ethics and the Ethical Screen what do you do and why? How do you handle the social media aspect of the dilemma?