

A Descriptive and Exploratory Study of the  
Ethics Program at Austin State Hospital:  
The Common Elements of the Program and  
Managers' Beliefs About the Purpose  
and Usefulness of the Program

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## Abstract

Challenging ethical dilemmas are part of the daily lives of the managers at Austin State Hospital. What resources are currently available at the Austin State Hospital to assist the staff with these ethical dilemmas? The purpose of this research is to explore the extent to which compliance, moral reasoning to guide employees in making ethical decisions or guiding ethical behavior, and encouraging employees to act as moral agents are present in the Austin State Hospital ethics program including: the ethics code, the ethics training, and the ethics committee. Working hypotheses are utilized to explore the elements and nature of the ethics program. The second research question addresses the managers' beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program at the Austin State Hospital. Descriptive categories are used to conceptualize the managers' beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the program.

The research is both exploratory and descriptive. A case study model is employed to analyze the ethics program. The ethics code is explored by document analysis. Interviews are conducted with the chair of the ethics committee and the trainer for the ethics training. The code, the committee, and the training are explored to determine if compliance with laws and rules, utilizing moral reasoning, and encouraging staff to act as moral agents is present. A survey is administered to thirty three of the managers to describe their beliefs regarding the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program.

When faced with clinical, business, and even issues of life and death, the managers at Austin State Hospital do have access to a well designed ethics program. The ethics code, the committee and the training program have elements of compliance, moral reasoning, and encouragement to act as moral agents. The managers believe that the training program and the committee are the most useful elements of the program. In general, the managers believe that

utilizing moral principles to guide decisions and shape ethical behavior are the main purpose of the program. A large number of the managers believe that the purpose of the program is to encourage employees to act as moral agents. The research does demonstrate that the managers at Austin State Hospital do have a substantial array of resources available to them for assistance when faced with ethical dilemmas.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Ethical Dilemmas at Austin State Hospital

A seventy-five year old female schizophrenic patient, who has been a resident at Austin State Hospital for thirty five years, receives a diagnosis of terminal cancer of the colon. Her treating psychiatrist is faced with an ethical dilemma. The patient is not legally incompetent; however, her psychiatrist is not confident that she can make an informed decision related to the level of care to be offered regarding her terminal condition. There are no known family members. In addition to the dilemmas facing psychiatrists at the Austin State Hospital, the management team is confronted with business, personnel, and budget ethical dilemmas. The managers in charge of contracts may be approached by a business offering gifts to encourage contracting with their company. A pharmaceutical representative may ask a clinical director to encourage exclusive utilization of their medication in return for free lunches for all medical staff. A nurse manager may favor hiring a familiar employee versus one unknown, but with more technical skills. A clinical treatment team can be faced with a patient who no longer meets the criteria for continued in-patient services; however, the patient insists upon returning to live under a bridge on Town Lake. These difficult ethical dilemmas are part of the daily lives of the managers at Austin State Hospital. What resources are currently available at Austin State Hospital to assist the staff with these ethical dilemmas?

### Historical and Political Background

The background standing behind this specific ethical dilemma includes the broad spectrum of ethics in public administration. Ethics in public administration exists in a world of power, efficiency, political agendas, and the pressure to produce acceptable results. (Garofalo and Geuras, 1999, 1) Post-Watergate morality has produced an intense and unprecedented search for a renewal of integrity in government at all levels. During the 1990's, a continuous stream of revelations, allegations, and investigations involving presidential advisors, U.S. Senators, a Speaker of the House of Representatives, cabinet secretaries, a Supreme Court nominee, campaign contributions, state and local government officials and even the President of the United States suggest reasons the American public has grown cynical and suspicious of government (Bowman and Williams, 1997, 517). This apparent disjunction between ethics and U.S. government leadership has led to public distrust of government.

In addition to the apparent erosion of public trust in government due to ongoing scandal, moral education has also declined. Where moral education once occupied a central role, it now is viewed by many educators as inappropriate in the classroom (Menzel, 1997, 224). Strengthening or building character prior to World War II was an integral part of both public and private education. Menzel suggests that the rise of logical positivism and the growth of science and technology facilitated the decrease of the classical moral education mentality (Menzel, 1997, 224). In public administration, the Wilsonian era led to the practice of neutral competency. Jennings emphasizes that logical positivism influenced Wilson and subsequently public administration (Jennings, 1991, 72). Logical positivism holds that claims which cannot be operationalized and tested empirically lack cognitive significance. Closely related to logical

positivism, ethical emoticism, maintains that normative and prescriptive claims are merely individual preferences, and may not be valid nor generalizable for public consumption (Jennings, 1991, 72). Menzel argues that the new holy trinity of public administration were "efficiency, economy, and effectiveness," (Menzel, 1997, 224).

Following Watergate (with near impeachment of President Nixon) the Iran-Contra Affair, and the Wall Street - HUD - Capitol Hill scandals a new age began to emerge related to the serious consideration of ethics in government. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed to law the Ethics in Government Act, committing government employees to standards of behavior, thus hoping to restore faith in government by the American public. In 1984, the American Society for Public Administration adopted an ethics code structured to raise the ethical standards and practices of its members (Menzel, 1997, 224).

In response to these growing concerns, public organizations have begun to build programs to enhance manager and employee thinking and behavior related to ethics. Bowman and Williams' 1997 survey of 750 public administrators, who were members of the American Society of Public Administrators, found:

The respondents indicate that ethics is hardly a fad and that government has the obligation to set the example in society. The findings emphasize the key role of leadership - both by its presence and absence - in encouraging honorable public service.  
(Bowman and Williams, 1997, 525).

Public organizations have included the formulation of ethical codes, the offering of ethical training programs, and the adoption of ethical advisors or ethical committees as common elements of their program. The purpose of the ethical programs varies across organizations. The three most common reasons for the program are to assist employees in complying with legal



or organizational rules or law, to develop moral reasoning, and to facilitate moral judgement. Research has been limited regarding the effectiveness of these programs; however, the literature indicated a generally positive outcome of these organizational efforts to enhance and encourage critical thinking and informed ethical behavior.<sup>1</sup>

### The Purpose of the Research and the Research Question

The purpose of this research is to explore the resources available for managers at Austin State Hospital when faced with ethical dilemmas and to describe the managers' beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program. The purpose is comprised of two research questions. First, what common elements in the ethics program provide guidance and assistance to the manager when faced with ethical decisions? Second, what do the managers believe is the purpose of the ethics program and have they found the program useful in finding solutions to their ethical dilemma?

Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature related to ethics in public institutions. From this review, some important elements are suggested as common elements of public administration ethics programs. Chapter Three contains the setting of the case study of the ethics program at Austin State Hospital. Included is a review of the methodologies utilized to explore the common elements of the ethics program at Austin State Hospital and to describe the managers' beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the program. Chapter Four contains an analysis of the results of the exploration of the ethics program. Chapter Five displays the results of the

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Bowman (1990) and Bowman (1997).

descriptions of the managers' beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the program. Chapter six summarizes the research and presents recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature related to public organizations' efforts to develop ethics programs. This review includes common elements of ethics programs, the purpose of ethics programs, and the effectiveness of ethics programs in public organizations.

### **The Purpose of Organizational Ethics Programs**

The literature<sup>2</sup> has suggested three common purposes for ethics programs: (1) ethics as compliance to authority, (2) ethics as moral reasoning, and (3) ethics as the practice of moral judgement. The authors have found elements of all three in public organizations. Some organizations display a predominant model and others a variety of purposes.

#### Ethics As Compliance

Chandler (1983, 33), Jennings (1991, 68) and Denhardt (1991, 96) reviewed the background influencing public organization's utilization of external control to encourage compliance with authority. They posit that Woodrow Wilson's 1887 "The Study of Administration" set in motion the school of thought which promoted public administration as an autonomous profession and to be practiced with neutrality (Jennings, 1991, 69). Wilson was influenced by the German thinker Max Weber, who considered it moral to avoid morality. He concluded that only law could be utilized as a guide to make ethical decisions (Chandler, 1983,

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<sup>2</sup> See for example: Chandler (1983); Cooper (1987); Denhardt (1991); Dobel (1998); Jennings (1991); Thompson (1985); and Weaver (1999).

34). This tradition emphasizes perfecting rules, regulations, and other control mechanisms (Denhardt, 1991, 97). Weber believed that the duty of the civil servant was to obey the orders of superior authorities.

In a 1999 study, Weaver, et. al. (1999, 55) concluded that the orientation toward compliance in organization has continued as a major method of ethics. They found that external factors such as public scrutiny and managers' commitment to the laws and rules facilitated this approach.

The ethics of compliance began against the corruption of local part politics toward the later part of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Wilson's reforms were in order and proved to enhance the role and image of public administration. Denhardt (1991, 981) and Jennings (1991, 68) argued that the compliance approach fails to consider the extent and depth of true ethical consideration. They posited that compliance to rules is finally insufficient to account for public administration's ethical responsibility.

### Ethics as Moral Reasoning

Cooper (1987) and Thompson (1985) both critiqued the ethics of compliance and recommends a serious renewal of ethics as moral reasoning. Terry Cooper claimed:

The tendency of hierarchical organizations to demand absolute loyalty to superiors and thereby displace other important values, even those associated with the formal goals of the organization is a well documented

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<sup>3</sup> The system that had been developed in the late 1800's was based on the belief that local control was needed to meet the interest of local people. The system became corrupt when the few individuals who rose to the top granted power and contracts for government projects, and governments jobs to the people who supported their ongoing reelection. President Wilson believed that the primary method to break this corrupt system was to develop a set of professionally educated administrators who were objective and competent. This group of professionals would not be swayed by special interest pressure, thus they could service the needs of all the people. (Knott and Miller)

phenomenon. Furthermore, it is clearly and overwhelmingly the most frequently occurring problem among the uses written by the more than 200 participants in administrative workshops which I have conducted.  
(Cooper, 1987, 320)

What Cooper and Thompson suggest is a normative approach to ethical thinking and actions. They are advocating development of ethical reasoning based on "principles." The two most prominent thinkers who influenced the normative approach to ethics are Aristotle and Immanuel Kant. *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (1946) and Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1953) remain as the key building blocks to an ethical construct based on an epistemology which posits that "universals" are "real." Aristotle believed that virtue was the key to ethics. He understood the purpose of politics was for the Good of all. This teleological concept which emphasizes the goal or purpose of ethics shaped western thought for centuries. The "good" man was one who saw that the results of ethical thinking and behavior resulted in justice for all. Kant's major contribution to ethical theory has been called the "categorical imperative." His three formulations comprise this rational moral value based understanding of ethics.

Act as if the maxim of your actions were to become through your will a universal law of nature.  
(Kant, 1953, 89)

Act in such a way that you always treat humanity whether in you own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.  
(Kant, 1953, 96)

..the Idea of the will of every rational being as a will which makes universal law.  
(Kant, 1953, 98)

These two thinkers have been rediscovered during the recent past by public administration (Jennings, 1991, 74). Thompson, Denhardt, and Cooper have all written extensively regarding ethics as moral reasoning. In this model, the public administration's orientation toward ethics has moved from law to principle; however, the moral force comes from the rightness of ethical principles, correctly applied. Ethical reasoning focuses on the process of reasoning, not the reasoner. Unlike the ethics of compliance, the ethics of moral reasoning goes beyond obedience. Principles such as public interest, social order, popular sovereignty, accountability, social justice, citizenship development, political equality, efficiency, and liberty guide a public administrator when facing ethical dilemmas (Cooper, 1987, 322). Like the ethics of compliance, the ethics of moral reasoning remains an ethics of neutrality. Cooper, Thompson, Denhardt, and Jennings have found the ethics of moral reasoning insufficient. They argue that lack of individual discretion and moral character finally insulates managers from accountability. They are aware of the concept of virtue of character. Aristotle's understanding of ethical reasoning is not merely a process of reasoning, but a trait of character. The public administrator, in this model, becomes an agent of ethical action. They offer a third alternative called moral judgement.

### Ethics as Moral Judgement

Aristotle (1953) distinguished between virtues (qualities of character) and moral principles, concluding that knowledge of the greater good is insufficient without the virtue or character to carry out that good.

(Denhardt, 1991, 102)

Denhardt recommends three core virtues for the foundation of moral character for public administration: honor, benevolence, and justice (Denhardt, 1991, 102). Honor implies magnanimity or great mindedness. Honesty and commitment to keep promises underlie honor. Benevolence means a disposition to do good for others. Service has long been a major component of government. By focusing upon the public good, an administrator may avoid the trap of obedience to an unjust superior. This may mean conflict or even a loss of employment; however, if one is to be a moral agent, this sacrifice may be unavoidable. Justice signifies fairness and regard for the rights of others. Denhardt suggests that justice stands above laws and regime values (Denhardt, 1991, 107). Rohr defines such regime value as those arising from the political entity. He specifically refers to the constitution which displays the values of justice, freedom, equality, and individual human rights (Rohr, 1978, 59) Only by putting justice first can public administration be able to identify or oppose unjust laws, and regime values which may be unfair.

Jennings outlines a proactive model for moral agents. He believes that Context of the Situation, the need for open dialogue, room to maneuver, and accommodation are all common elements of public administrators' proactive approach to being an ethical agent (Jennings, 1991, 82).

Cooper offered "obligation" as a virtue (Cooper, 1987, 324). He understands that obligation to pursue the public interest, obligations authorizing processes and procedure, and obligation to colleagues as elements of the practice of public administration. These are methods to display honor, justice, and benevolence.



Thompson (1985, 560) argues that administrative ethics as moral agent is possible. Garofalo and Guevas (1999, 182) outline an integrated approach which appears as a worthy guide to public administrators who grow to understand their role as moral agents. In this model, the public administrator approaches management and ethical issues from a normative framework. They argue that as a moral agent, public administrators make a conscious effort to consider the moral dimensions of their actions and decisions. In this model, there is not fragmented separation of the process of reasoning and moral character. These two elements are part of a greater whole which provides the possibility of moral, political and administrative legitimacy, grounded in constitutional value.

To be a moral agent would appear to take great courage. For how can one be assured that one is not brainwashing others or imposing their own limited and inadequate moral judgements upon others. Along with courage, if public administration chooses to operate with the moral agent methodology, it would appear prudent to maintain the virtue of humility. Dobel (1998, 80) warned that even prudent leaders may fail. Ethics is a serious business and public organizations are wise to establish programs to train, guide, support and practice well-grounded ethics.

### **Common Elements of Organizational Ethics Programs**

Three common elements have become part of public organizational ethics programs, including, (1) an ethics code, (2) ethics training programs and (3) ethics advisors or an ethics committee (Bowman, 1990). All three elements are reviewed for their content, function, purposes, and methods.



## Ethics Codes

Dobel (1993, 158), Chandler (1983, 32) and Lewis (1993, 136) assert that the rise of the use of codes by public administration during the last three decades began as a response to scandal and public cynicism. Dobel (1993, 158) suggests that the purpose of adopting ethical codes was to increase confidence in government by reassuring citizens that private power and interest will not subvert government decisions. Lewis offers the following philosophical rationale for the adoption of an ethics code:

Since Hammurabi, Moses, and Hippocrates, codifiers and executors have operated on the theory that it is easier to do the right thing when one knows what that is. As a result, codified standard of conduct have become a popular vehicle for clarifying minimum expectations about acceptable behavior.

(Lewis, 1993, 136)

Either as a response to scandal and cynicism, or as a written guide, as of 1993, thirty-six states had passed ethics codes and established commissions or agencies to oversee ethics activities. Many cities and counties have codes or commissions as well (Dobel, 1993, 188).

What does not appear well researched in the literature is how the codes are utilized. The literature suggests content for codes, but the rationale is not often explicit. This review extrapolates the underlying purpose of the content of public organizational code.

Lewis (1993, 14) summarizes the core content of most public organizational codes:

- prohibitions on abuse of office for personal gain and conflict of interest
- to prevent and avoid abuse
- personal financial disclosure for candidates and high-level officials

Dobel (1993, 161) believes that codes are primarily negative and prohibitive in nature. Ethics codes traditionally focus upon conflict-of-interest and attempt to insulate public officials from the influence of money, family, or business. In addition, ethics codes try to demarcate public and private life by limiting the giving and receiving of gifts and the utilization of government property for private gain. Dobel (1993, 162) asserts that this approach to public ethics leads to internal cynicism and little utilization of codes by managers, other than appearances or for rhetoric to appease the public. This is due primarily to the tendency to find fault or blame employees

In 1989, a Presidential Commission on Federal Ethics Law Reform recognized the limit to the regulatory approach in its report, *To Serve with Honor* (1989, 1):

Laws and rules can never be fully descriptive of what an ethical person should do. They simply establish minimal standards of conduct. Possible variations in conduct are infinite, virtually impossible to describe and proscribe by statute. Compulsion by law is the most expensive way to make people behave.

If ethics codes began as a response to scandal and mistrust and as a method to direct government employees away from illegal and inappropriate behavior, can ethics codes also incorporate a more normative element? Bowman (1990, 347) and Bowman and Williams (1997, 519) conducted research to determine managers' attitudes about the role of ethics, including ethics codes. A survey was completed in 1989 and in 1996 of 750 administrators who were members of the American Society for Public Administration. The 1989 survey and the 1996 both included a question designed to explore beliefs about managers' perceptions related to ethics. In both studies, Bowman found that only a small percentage of the administrators believed that ethics codes were a tool to encourage a proactive, human-development model which

encouraged moral behavior. The 1989 study indicated 7.5 percent perceived this approach to be the purpose of ethics codes, and the 1996 study found 10.5 percent. Both studies indicated that administrators viewed the codes as either having no consistent approach or a legalistic blame-oriented approach intended to detect unethical or illegal behavior. These two studies presented the case that a normative approach to ethics codes was not a strong preference in public administrators' understanding of the purpose of the ethics code.

Chandler (1983, 32-33) argues that the reluctance to utilize a more normative approach to ethics codes exists because:

- a general fear of moralizing
- the American tradition of consensus building and avoidance of universal ideals
- the lingering influences of Wilson and Weber who insisted that public administrators are servants of superiors

As a counter to these arguments against the moral use of codes, Chandler offers three arguments for a more normative approach. First, the ancient debate among philosophers and theologians insists that behavior is grounded in some form of transcendent values. This may be the Good, God, or some form of ultimate being. This point of view suggests that the subjective, the inner-self can make moral decisions because it is grounded in a higher truth. Ethics codes can be based on a commitment to this higher truth. Second, ethics are tied to a sense of community. In this sense, moral behavior is not just a private matter.

Aristotle warned repeatedly that it is possible to obey laws and regulations and still be unethical. The community looks at the nature of an act in order to decide whether it is moral or not.

Third, the moral purpose of codes can be based in courage. The virtue of courage means that public administrators voluntarily behave and think in ways which maintain justice and equity, without being self righteous.

Ethics codes can be utilized by public administration to have an employee comply with law, serve as a foundation for moral reasoning or facilitate moral judgement. The choices remain with the leadership regarding the content and purpose of ethics codes.

### Ethics Training

Another response to scandal and mistrust of government has been the rise of ethics training programs. Menzel (1997) found that Master of Public Administration programs have moved towards the incorporation of ethics instruction and courses in the curriculum. Thompson (1992, 254) noted that following the legislative and executive order adopted in 1989, mandatory training, coordinated by the U.S. Office of Government Ethics is now required of all employees appointed by the President. He estimated that during the next two years between 400,00 and 600,00 will be receiving ethics training. In a 1992 study, Delaney and Sockell (1992, 722) found that 61.9 percent of public administrators had participated in an ethical training program and that 71.4 percent who did not have an ethical training program desired to have a training program. In 1990, Bowman's (1990, 350) national survey found that many of the participants recommend an organizational training and development program to assist leaders in making ethical decisions. Bowman (1990, 350) found that public administrators recommended that ethics training program include:

- values clarification related to the agency's mission

- methods to ascertain the existence and nature of ethical dilemmas
- regularly scheduled training by management or experts in the methods to solve ethical dilemmas
- effective modeling of ethical thinking and behavior by top management

Menzel (1997, 229) notes that little research has been completed related to the conceptual approaches to ethics education in organizations. His research focuses upon the School of Public Administration. Similar to the function or purpose of ethical codes, the various approaches to teaching would seem to be compliance orientation, moral reasoning, or moral judgement. Jennings (1991, 66) argues for a moral judgement orientation. Dehardt (1991, 109) proposes that the imperative - honor, benevolence, and justice - should have a central place in the education of public administrators. The conclusion may be drawn that these authors would make the same suggestions and recommendations for public administration in general.

Garofalo and Geuras (1994, 285) state the following as a key issue in public administration educating regarding ethics:

An ethics training program will not likely succeed in converting people who are totally bereft of morality; however, the task of ethics training or education for MPA students or public servants is not so extreme. MPA students or trainees in public organizations have, we may assume, a structure of fundamental values, including regime value, so the presence of a spot of core values is not at issue. What is in question is the ability of untutored or unsophisticated sensibilities to cope effectively with the many complex and subtle ethical dilemmas endemic to public service.

Garofalo and Geuras (1994, 285) propose that neither an objective - non-imposing approach nor an imposing- values approach is adequate to teaching ethics. They suggest the alternate which offers a rationally based ethics education, which would not impose ethical

standards, but might evoke voluntary adoption of ethical principles based on clear identification of principles and values (Garofalo and Geuras, 1999, 132).

Along with the rise of ethical codes, ethical training programs are being used to serve multiple needs in organizations. These elements may begin to restore credibility by the public in public administration.

### Ethics Committees

The third common element suggested by the literature is the need for an ethics committee in public organizations. As part of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, public organizations at the Federal level were instructed to appoint ethical advisors and to have some type of ethical training program (Thompson, 1992, 254). By 1990, 7,109 federal officials had substantial roles as ethical advisors. The primary role of the advisors was educational (Thompson, 1992, 254).

The literature is sparse relating to the expansion and development of the role and function of ethics advisors. The original fear about the ethics officers or committees becoming a massive police force has proved to be unfounded. Although this element of ethical programs has grown, it has remained the least well-defined and the literature does not provide elaborate discussion of the role or formation of ethical advisors (Thompson, 1992, 254).

In his 1989 survey of 750 public administrators, who were members of the American Society of Public Administrators, Bowman presented three possible roles for ethical leaders (1990, 351-352). These three could be possible roles for ethical committees as well as leadership in general.



The ethical roles recommended were advocate, consultant, and advisor. As advocates, the ethics committee could publicly promote the importance and need to raise the standard for ethical thinking and ethical behavior. The committee could assist in explaining the organization's ethics code. The committee may identify public acts that appear unethical or cite model acts of sound ethical behavior or thinking (Bowman, 1993, 354).

The ethics committee may act as consultants to the organization. While developing organization codes and training programs, the ethics committee could evaluate and provide feedback to the organizational leader regarding the quality and clarity of these two elements of the program (Bowman, 1990, 351). The committee may facilitate special educational programs or symposiums. A major function may be to receive ethical problems from the organization to provide advice, consultation, or as a resource to guide the ethical decision making process. The committee may publish an on-going newsletter or other scheduled documents to provide proactive ethical consultation for the organization.

The third category is the most controversial. As an evaluator of the ethical behavior and thinking of the organization, the committee or advisor places itself in a role open to severe criticism. Bowman (1990, 351) warns that if this role is adopted, it must be consistent, fair, and maintain the credibility to deal openly and honestly with ethical dilemmas without seeking blame or punishment. From his 1989 survey, Bowman (1990, 351) concludes:

Finally, and not surprising from a group of professional administrators, they are concerned that clear and fair procedure be designed to make the canons real in daily agency life.

These three common elements may not assure ethical behavior and thinking that is serious and courageous, however, they would appear to enhance such positive processes.

### **Usefulness of the Ethics Program**

Jurkiewicz and Thompson (1999, 41-53), conducted an exploratory study of 207 health care executives from across the United States regarding factors that influenced their ethical behavior, either to raise their standards or lower their standards. They concluded that working with an ethics committee had a very limited impact on raising the executives' ethical standards. In an open-ended question regarding the possible factors influencing their ethical behavior, there was no mention of an ethics code. The results of this study indicated a minimum effect of the ethics committee on strengthening ethical conduct.

Bowman (1990, 348) found that of 750 public administrators surveyed regarding the effectiveness of ethical codes, 40% believed they had a positive effect, 40% believed they did not, and 20% were uncertain. In the same survey, he found that 63.9% believed that most organizations had no consistent approach to ethical programs (Bowman, 347).

In a 1994 study, Menzel (1996, 227) discovered that 43% of MPA graduates believed that ethics education was useful in solving ethical dilemmas and 31% believed it was not. Those who did not find the training useful indicated that their family values and superiors' behavior were stronger influences upon their ethical thinking and behavior.

Schmidt and Posner (1986, 452) surveyed Federal Executive Institute Alumni Association senior level executives and concluded that the behavior of superiors and peers behavior influenced their ethical behavior to a greater extent than did the company's formal ethics program.

The literature indicates a mixed evaluation of the effectiveness of government ethical programs. In general, the literature suggests the need for further empirical studies related to the



common elements of government ethical programs, the beliefs of leaders related to the purpose of the program, and the effectiveness of the program.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The literature has suggested that as a response to numerous scandals and the inadequacy of Wilsonian theories of neutral competency many public organizations have developed formal ethics programs. Common elements from the literature emerged as part of public organizational ethics programs:

- Ethics code
- Ethics training
- Ethics advisor or committee

What has been lacking in the literature are studies regarding managers' beliefs regarding the purpose of the program and the effectiveness of the program. This study will be based on an analysis of the ethics program at Austin State Hospital.

Two research questions are considered in this study. Question one explores the extent to which compliance, moral reasoning to guide employees in making ethical decisions or guiding ethical behavior, and encouraging employees to act as moral agents are present in the Austin State Hospital Ethics program including: the ethics code, the ethics training, and the ethics committee. Working hypotheses are utilized to explore the elements and nature of the ethics programs. Table 2.1 displays these working hypotheses. The second research question addresses the managers' beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program at Austin

State Hospital. Descriptive categories are used to conceptualize the managers' beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program.

The descriptive categories regarding the managers' beliefs about the purpose of the ethics program include beliefs that the ethics code, the ethics committee, and the ethics training program may include elements committing employees to compliance with laws and regulations, developing or encouraging employees to utilize moral reasoning when making ethical decisions or to guide ethical behavior, and to challenge employees to serve as moral agents by modeling character traits outlined in the code, the training program, and ethics committee. The usefulness of the program will include the descriptive categories of the managers belief about the usefulness of the ethics committee, the usefulness of the ethics code, and the usefulness of ethics education. Tables 2.2 and 2.3 display these conceptual categories describing the beliefs of the managers related to the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program at Austin State Hospital

**RESEARCH QUESTION 1:**

Extent to which compliance, moral reasoning to guide decisions or shape behavior, and acting as a moral agent are present in the ethics code, committee, or training.

**Table 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

<b>Working Hypotheses Linked to the Literature</b>	
<b>Source</b>	<b>Working Hypotheses</b>
Chandler (1983), Jennings (1991), Weaver (1999) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Denhardt (1991), Jennings (1991), Cooper (1987), Thompson (1988), Dobel (1998)	W.H.1: Code has elements of: 1A. Compliance 1B. Moral reasoning to guide decisions 1C. Moral reasoning to shape behavior 1D. Acting as moral agents
Chandler (1983), Jennings (1991), Weaver (1999) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Denhardt (1991), Jennings (1991), Cooper (1987), Thompson (1988), Dobel (1998)	W.H.2: Training has elements present of: 2A. Compliance 2B. Moral reasoning to guide decisions 2C. Moral reasoning to shape behavior 2D. Acting as moral agents
Chandler (1983), Jennings (1991), Weaver (1999) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Denhardt (1991), Jennings (1991), Cooper (1987), Thompson (1988), Dobel (1998)	W.H.3: Committee has elements present of: 3A. Compliance 3B. Moral reasoning to guide decisions 3C. Moral reasoning to shape behavior 3D. Acting as moral agents

**RESEARCH QUESTION 2:**

Beliefs of the Managers about the purpose and usefulness of the Ethics Program

**Table 2.2: Conceptual Framework**

<b>Beliefs About the Purpose of The Ethics Program</b>	
<b>Source</b>	<b>Category</b>
Chandler (1983) Jennings (1991) Denhardt (1991) Weaver (1997)	Compliance is the purpose of the: 1) ethics code 2) ethics training 3) ethics committee
Cooper (1987) Thompson (1985)	Encouraging employees to utilize moral principles when making ethical decisions is the purpose of the: 1) ethics code 2) ethics training 3) ethics committee
Cooper (1987) Thompson (1985)	Encouraging employees to utilize moral principles when shaping ethical behavior is the purpose of the: 1) ethics code 2) ethics training 3) ethics committee
Denhardt (1991) Jennings (1991) Cooper (1987) Thompson (1985)	Challenging employees to act as moral agents is the purpose of the: 1) ethics code 2) ethics training 3) ethics committee

## RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

Table 2.3: Conceptual Framework

Beliefs About the Usefulness of The Ethics Program	
Source	Category
Jurkiewicz and Thompson (1991) Bowman (1990) Menzel (1996) Schmidt and Posner (1986) Thompson (1992)	Gaining compliance has been aided by the: 1) ethics code 2) ethics training 3) ethics committee
Jurkiewicz and Thompson (1991) Bowman (1990) Menzel (1996) Schmidt and Posner (1986) Thompson (1992)	Utilization of moral principles when making ethical decisions has been aided by the: 1) ethics code 2) ethics training 3) ethics committee
Jurkiewicz and Thompson (1991) Bowman (1990) Menzel (1996) Schmidt and Posner (1986) Thompson (1992)	Utilization of moral principles when shaping ethical behavior has been aided by the: 1) ethics code 2) ethics training 3) ethics committee
Jurkiewicz and Thompson (1991) Bowman (1990) Menzel (1996) Schmidt and Posner (1986) Thompson (1992)	Challenging employees to act as moral agents has been aided by the: 1) ethics code 2) ethics training 3) ethics committee

## **Chapter Three**

### **Ethics Resources Available at Austin State Hospital**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the setting and methodology utilized to explore the available ethical resources and describe the managers beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program at Austin State Hospital.

The Austin State Hospital is one of eight state hospitals under the auspices of the Texas Board of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. The hospital is located at 4110 Guadalupe, Austin, Texas. The hospital currently maintains over three hundred beds available for persons with serious mental illnesses residing in the central Texas area. The hospital offers services on an in-patient basis to children and adolescents, adults, older persons, with mental illness, persons with mental illness/mental retardation, and persons who are deaf/mentally ill.

The treatment programs consists of an array of services including psychotropic medication, medical services, psychological services, social work services, and psycho-social rehabilitation treatment programs. Each residential unit has a physician and a twenty-four hour a day nursing staff available for care of all patients. Meals, laundry, recreational activities, and religious services are offered to all patients.

The organizational structure at Austin State Hospital is based upon a Superintendent and a senior management team. The Assistant Superintendent, the Clinical Director, the Assistant Clinical Director, the Director of Nursing Services, the Director of Human Resources, the Director of Quality Management, the Chief Financial officer, and the Director of Client's Rights comprise the senior management team. The next level of management includes the department heads. This group represents the various clinical and support directors of the departments at the

Austin State Hospital. The service directors and discipline directors are supervised by the Clinical Director. The Chief Financial officer, the Assistant Superintendent, and the Director of Human Resources manage the other Department Heads. The Director of Nursing supervises the central nursing department and the four unit nurse managers. This management team is a diverse group with a variety of clinical and management backgrounds. All Department Heads are responsible for the operation and management of budget, personnel, programs or business processes, and physical plant. All Department Heads are faced with a variety of ethical dilemmas and challenges.

### **The Ethics Program**

The resources available to managers at the Austin State Hospital are: (1) a written ethics code, (2) an ethics committee, (3) an ethics training program. The ethics code was originally written as a combined effort of the original Rights and Ethics Committee during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The current code was revised in August of 1999. The code contains seven statements and an accompanying clarification. The seven statements include topics related to being providers of mental health services, administrative and technical support, to being professional staff, public servants, members of a training team, being state employees, and members of a working community. The code is posted and visible in all departments at the hospital.

The current ethics committee is a replacement for two former committees. In March, 1997, the former Rights and Organizational Committee, as well as the former Austin State Hospital Committee (bioethics) were replaced by the current Ethics Committee. The committee

is chaired by Dr. Nancy Wilson, Chief Psychologist of Specialty Services. The committee is comprised of staff from the Austin State Hospital, an attorney, a local seminary professor, and a patient advocate representative. The committee's purpose is to be available for consultation, education and review of policies and procedures. The committee offers consultation related to significant ethical dilemmas as well as consultation regarding advance directives, informed consent, the Texas Natural Death Act, and review of policy and procedures.

The ethics training at the Austin State Hospital is based on a formal training manual entitled Ethical Behavior (TXMHMR, 1998). The manual is based on the Josephson Institute's six pillars of ethical decision making. The manual includes both rational decision making guidelines and encourages employees to consider character traits as a possibility for ethical dilemmas, at the Austin State Hospital. West Hansen, the Assistant Director of Patient Rights is the instructor of Ethics training for all new employees at the Austin State Hospital. In 1998, Becky Mascot, the Director of Patient Rights, trained all the Department Heads in an overview of the Ethical Behavior Manual. All Department Heads trained their employees using the Ethical Behavior Manual and a summary approach suggested by Becky Mascot. West Hansen utilizes the training manual and a blend of Abraham Maslow's understanding of values to train all new employees. At the current time, no ongoing training related to ethics is present at the Austin State Hospital.

### **Methodology**

The research is both exploratory and descriptive. Yin states that:

The case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behavior cannot be manipulated. The case study



relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian's repertoire: direct observation and systematic interviewing.  
(Yin, 1994,8)

Yin further states that the case study allows investigation of real life events such as organizational and management processes.<sup>4</sup> The advantages of the case study is the ability to examine a variety of sources including observation, document analysis, interviews and surveys. This research was a single case study of the Ethics program at the Austin State Hospital. Yin does warn researchers to be aware of the weaknesses of case studies. He notes that the case study may not be a complete picture of an organization.<sup>5</sup> The organization may change and the case study may not capture all aspects of the organizational culture. In spite of these weaknesses, the case study appeared to be the most appropriate research technique for this project. This study includes interviews, document analysis, and a survey.

### Interviews

The sources for the exploration of the Ethics training and the Ethics Committee are interviews. Yin states that:

One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview. Such a conclusion may be surprising, because of the unusual association between interviews and the survey method. However, interviews are also essential sources of case study information.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Yin, 1994, p.8.

<sup>5</sup> Yin, 1994, 41.

<sup>6</sup> Yin, 1994, 85.

The chair of the Ethics Committee and the instructor of the Ethics training program are interviewed for the study. Both are interviewed utilizing questions related to the presence of compliance, moral reasoning, or acting as a moral agent. Appendix A displays the questions utilized for both interviews.

### Documents

The primary document for this study was the Ethics code at the Austin State Hospital. The analysis is based on the interview questions which seek to determine if compliance, moral reasoning, or acting as a moral agent are present in the training and the code.

### Survey

In order to operationalize the second research question which inquires about the managers' beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program, a survey is conducted. The survey is administered to twenty-eight (28) department heads, four nurse managers, and the Assistant Director of Nurses.. The four nurse managers were included because they supervise a large number of employees. This seemed important for representation of the population at Austin State Hospital. Appendix B displays the letter to the managers and the survey.

### Population

The survey is administered to twenty eight department heads, four nurse managers, and the Assistant Director of Nursing. This is a diverse group and a survey appeared to be the most appropriate method to describe the managers' beliefs about the purposes and usefulness of the

Ethics program at Austin State Hospital. The nurse managers were included in the survey because they represent a large amount of the employees at Austin State Hospital.

The survey is measured by an ordinal Likert scale. The scale includes: "strongly agree," "agree," "not sure," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Simple percentages are used to display the results. Appendix B provides a copy of the letter and survey delivered to the managers. The survey was presented to the Research Committee December 30, 1999. On January 25, 2000, the committee formally approved the research design with recommendations that additional staff be included in the survey and an accompanying letter include an explanation of the four possible purposes of the ethics program. In February 2000, thirty-three surveys and an accompanying letter were delivered to the managers. At the Department Heads staff meeting in December 1999 and January 2000, the Department Heads were encouraged by the Superintendent of Austin State Hospital to complete the survey. While surveys have several strengths, there are weaknesses. According to Babbie, surveys are inflexible, tend to measure the least common denominator about attitudes, and may not have a "feel" for the real context of the research setting. Although these weaknesses are recognized, the survey is an adequate measure of beliefs and attitudes. The survey appears to be appropriate for this research (Babbie, 1992, 278).

#### Operationalization of the Exploratory Research Questions and the Descriptive Research

Table 3.1 displays the interview questions and the evidence summary utilized for the interviews and the document analysis. Table 3.2 and 3.3 summarize the use of evidence for the survey.

Table 3.1

**SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**  
**Research Question 1**

Linking the Analysis of the Ethics Program to Working Hypothesis

Literature	Working Hypotheses	Data Source
Chandler (1983), Jennings (1991), Thompson (1985) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Denhardt (1991), Jennings (1991), Thompson (1988), Dobel (1998)	W.H.1: Code has elements of: 1A. Compliance 1B. Moral reasoning to guide decisions 1C. Moral reasoning to shape behavior 1D. Acting as moral agents	Document Analysis Document Analysis Document Analysis Document Analysis
Chandler (1983), Jennings (1991), Thompson (1985) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Denhardt (1991), Jennings (1991), Thompson (1988), Dobel (1998)	W.H.2: Training has elements present of: 2A. Compliance 2B. Moral reasoning to guide decisions 2C. Moral reasoning to shape behavior 2D. Acting as moral agents	Interview Question 1 Interview Question 2 Interview Question 3 Interview Question 4
Chandler (1983), Jennings (1991), Thompson (1985) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985) Denhardt (1991), Jennings (1991), Thompson (1988), Dobel (1998)	W.H.3: Committee has elements present of: 3A. Compliance 3B. Moral reasoning to guide decisions 3C. Moral reasoning to shape behavior 3D. Acting as moral agents	Interview Question 1 Interview Question 2 Interview Question 3 Interview Question 4

Table 3.2

**OPERATIONALIZATION OF DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORIES**  
**Linking the Conceptual Framework to the Survey Instrument**

**Beliefs About the Purpose of the Ethics Program**

Literature	Category	Question No.
Chandler (1983), Jennings (1991), Thompson (1985)	1. Compliance is the purpose of:  1.A. Ethics code 1.B. Ethics training 1.C. Ethics Committee	1.A 1.B 1.C
Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985)	2. Using moral principles is the purpose of:  2.A. Ethics code 2.B. Ethics training 2.C. Ethics Committee	2.A 2.B 2.C
Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985)	3. Using moral principles to shape ethical behavior is the purpose of:  3.A. Ethics code 3.B. Ethics training 3.C. Ethics Committee	3.A 3.B 3.C
Denhardt (1991), Jennings (1991), Thompson (1988), Dobel (1998)	4. Challenging employees to act as moral agents is the purpose of:  4.A. Ethics code 4.B. Ethics training 4.C. Ethics Committee	4.A 4.B 4.C

Table 3.3

**OPERATIONALIZATION OF DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORIES**  
**Linking the Conceptual Framework to the Survey Instrument**

**Beliefs About the Usefulness of the Ethics Program**

Literature	Category	Question No.
Chandler (1983), Jennings (1991), Thompson (1985)	5. Gaining compliance has been aided by the:  1.A. Ethics code 1.B. Ethics training 1.C. Ethics Committee	1.A 1.B 1.C
Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985)	6. Utilization of moral principles has been aided by the:  2.A. Ethics code 2.B. Ethics training 2.C. Ethics Committee	2.A 2.B 2.C
Cooper (1987), Thompson (1985)	7. Utilization of moral principles has been aided by the:  3.A. Ethics code 3.B. Ethics training 3.C. Ethics Committee	3.A 3.B 3.C
Denhardt (1991), Jennings (1991), Thompson (1988), Dobel (1998)	8. Challenging employees to act as moral agents has been aided by the:  4.A. Ethics code 4.B. Ethics training 4.C. Ethics Committee	4.A 4.B 4.C

## Chapter Four

### Results of Exploratory Research Questions: The Ethics Program

The purpose of this chapter is to review the results of the exploration of the ethics program at Austin State Hospital. The working hypotheses are utilized as a framework to shape the examination of the ethics program.

#### Working Hypothesis One: The Ethics Code

A document analysis is summarized related to elements of compliance, moral reasoning, and acting as moral agents. The Austin State Hospital Ethics Code specifically refers to the prohibition of accepting gifts or developing contracts for individual financial gain. Conflict of interest related to billing and reimbursement is also prohibited. All contracts with other agencies are to be based solely on the ability of companies and individuals to provide those services. Elements of compliance with rules is strongly present in the Austin State Hospital Ethics code.

The ethics code specifically refers to ethical values and principles to guide decisions and shape employer behavior.

We will adhere to the ethical principles and values of integrity, confidentiality, autonomy, justice, beneficence (do good) and non-maleficence, (do no harm) (Austin State Hospital Ethics Code, 1999)

The code encourages staff to make decisions based on the dignity and best interest of both the public and patients. The code asks professional staff to be aware of their own professional ethical standards and to comply with those standards. The code clearly has elements which offer guidance to ethical decisions and to shape ethical behavior.

The code does display elements which encourage employees to act as moral agents.

As employees of Austin State Hospital, we are committed to carrying out our duties with integrity, honesty, fairness, and diligence. We recognize our responsibilities to community, staff, and consumers while performing our different roles.

(Austin State Hospital Ethics Code, 1999)

The code encourages a proactive approach to ethical behavior. The values outlined are to be part of the staff's operation of the hospital and service to patients. Working hypothesis one is supported.

#### Working Hypothesis Two: The Ethics Training

On February 18, 2000, West Hansen, Assistant Director of Patient Rights was interviewed to determine the presence of compliance, moral reasoning, and acting as moral agents in the Ethics training at Austin State Hospital.

Mr. Hansen states that compliance to roles and laws are an essential part of his teaching new employees. He utilizes real life case examples to illustrate the need to comply with rules and laws. He stresses this issue especially related to not accepting gifts from vendors as part of the business practices at Austin State Hospital. Mr. Hansen also believes that reference to moral reasoning is an essential element in his teaching format. He encourages employees to utilize such moral principles as honesty, fairness, and integrity when faced with ethical dilemmas. He borrow from Maslow's hierarchy of values to teach staff the importance of moral reasoning when making ethical decisions. Mr. Hansen does utilize the Texas Department of Mental Health Mental Retardation Ethical Behavior Manual (1998) to teach the importance of character traits. The manual borrows from the Josephson Institute's six pillars of character traits



as a suggested base for ethical behavior. The six character traits are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Mr. Hansen utilizes specific case examples to illustrate how these character traits may influence the decision or behavior of employees.

Compliance, moral reasoning, and acting as moral agents are all present in the ethical training program at Austin State Hospital. Working hypotheses two is supported.

### Working Hypotheses Three: The Ethics Committee

On February 15, 2000, Dr. Nancy Wilson, chair of the Austin State Hospital Ethics Committee is interviewed regarding the presence of compliance, moral reasoning, and acting as moral agents in the Ethics Committee. Dr. Wilson states that all of these elements are part of the consultation process of the committee. Dr. Wilson states that the committee refers to rules and laws if they are relevant to a particular ethical dilemma. She confirms that the committee does not espouse a specific set of moral principles; however, the committee may reference moral principles that may be considered when faced with an ethical dilemma. She related that some ethical dilemmas may have an apparent conflict of value. In these cases, Dr. Wilson relates that the function of the committee is to clarify the underlying moral principles, and to suggest possible solutions. She indicates that the committee does not present itself as moral experts; however, they do encourage staff to act upon moral principles. She believes that a proactive approach to being moral agents is part of the consultation role of the committee. Again, she insists that the committee does not attempt to push a particular set of behaviors upon the staff; but rather, the committee may outline how a person who is just, fair, or honest may act in a given situation. Compliance, moral reasoning, and actin as moral agents are part of the Ethics

Committee processes. Working Hypothesis three is confirmed. Table 4.1 displays a summary of the results of the working hypotheses.

**Table 4.1**

Summary of the Results of the Working Hypotheses Related to the  
Common Elements of the Ethics Program at Austin State Hospital

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Results</b>
W.H.1: Code has elements of:  1A. Compliance 1B. Moral reasoning to guide decisions 1C. Moral reasoning to shape behavior 1D. Acting as moral agents	Supported Supported Supported Supported
W.H.2: Training has elements present of:  2A. Compliance 2B. Moral reasoning to guide decisions 2C. Moral reasoning to shape behavior 2D. Acting as moral agents	Supported Supported Supported Supported
W.H.3: Committee has elements present of:  3A. Compliance 3B. Moral reasoning to guide decisions 3C. Moral reasoning to shape behavior 3D. Acting as moral agents	Supported Supported Supported Supported

## Chapter Five

### Results of Descriptive Research Questions: The Managers' Beliefs About the Purpose and Usefulness of the Ethics Program

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the survey of the managers' beliefs at Austin State Hospital regarding the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program. The essential purposes analyzed are compliance, utilizing moral principles to either guide ethical decisions or shape ethical behavior, and challenging employees to act as moral agents. The common elements of the program available for the manager are the ethics code, the ethics training, and the ethics committee. These descriptive categories are summarized and analyzed.

Thirty-three surveys were personally delivered to twenty eight department heads, four nurse managers, and the Assistant Director of Nursing at Austin State Hospital. By the end of the allotted time period, eighty two percent (82%) of the surveys were completed and returned. Table 5.1 displays the results of the purpose of the program. Table 5.2 displays the results of the usefulness of the program. This appears to be a more than an adequate sample result to trust the findings.

#### Summary of Manager's Beliefs About the Purpose of the Ethics Program

As displayed in Table 5.1, the managers believe by a slight majority (62%) that compliance is the purpose of the ethics code and the ethics committee (64%). They believe, by a strong majority, that compliance is the purpose of the ethics training.

As demonstrated by Table 5.1, the managers believe strongly that the purpose of the code, the training and the committee is to guide ethical decisions making. A small number of

Table 5.1

**Results of Survey to Describe The Manager Beliefs  
About the Purpose of the Ethics Program**

N=27

SA=Strongly Agree    A=Agree    NS=Not Sure    D=Disagree    SD=Strongly Disagree

Question	SA	A	NS	D	SD	*No. of Responses	Means
1. Compliance is the purpose of:							
A. Ethics Code	31%	31%	8%	22%	8%	N=26	3.55
B. Ethics Training	28%	36%	8%	24%	4%	N=25	3.56
C. Ethics Committee	19%	35%	4%	30%	12%	N=26	3.07
2. Using moral principles to guide ethical decision making is the purpose of the:							
A. Ethics Code	33%	44%	8%	11%	4%	N=27	3.91
B. Ethics Training	41%	30%	22%	7%	0%	N=27	4.05
C. Ethics Committee	32%	52%	12%	4%	0%	N=25	4.08
3. Using moral principles to shape ethical behavior is the purpose of the:							
A. Ethics Code	35%	41%	12%	12%	0%	N=26	3.99
B. Ethics Training	32%	52%	8%	8%	0%	N=25	4.08
C. Ethics Committee	16%	56%	24%	4%	0%	N=25	3.84
4. Challenging employees to act as moral agents is the purpose of the:							
A. Ethics Code	17%	33%	21%	25%	4%	N=24	3.34
B. Ethics Training	41%	33%	15%	11%	0%	N=27	4.04
C. Ethics Committee	25%	54%	40%	17%	0%	N=24	4.85

\* Some managers did not answer all categories

the managers (15%) disagree that the purpose of the code is to guide ethical decision making. A strong majority of the managers believe using moral principles to shape ethical behavior is the purpose of all three elements of the program. Some of the managers (24%) were uncertain if the purpose of the ethics committee was to shape ethical behavior. As Table 5.1 indicates, this category displays a mixed result. Half of the managers believe the purpose of the code is to challenge employees to act as moral agents, twenty-one percent (21%) are uncertain, and twenty-nine percent (29%) disagree. A strong majority believe that acting as moral agents is the purpose of the training and the committee.

Table 5.2 indicates that the majority of the managers believe that the training and the committee aid compliance. A majority sixty-eight percent (68%) believe the code aids compliance.

Table 5.2 reveals the managers' strong beliefs that all three elements have aided the use of moral principles to guide ethical decisions. Some (twenty seven percent (27%)) of the managers disagree that the code has aided the use of moral principles to guide ethical decisions. A strong majority of the managers believe that the training and committee aid the utilization of moral principles to shape ethical behavior. A somewhat less strong number, sixty-five percent (65%) believe the code is aiding utilization of moral principles to guide ethical behavior. Table 5.2 reveals these results. A slight majority of the managers (60%) believe the code and the committee have aided employees to act as moral agents. A stronger majority believe the training program has aided employees to act as moral agents. Some of the managers (20%) disagree that the code has aided employees to act as moral agents. Table 5.2 displays these results.

Summary of Ranking Analysis of Manager's beliefs About the Purpose and  
Usefulness of the Ethics Program

Table 5.3 displays a ranking of the purpose of the training, the code, and the committee. Training and the committee are ranked higher than the code for all four purposes. Table 5.4 displays the rankings of the usefulness of the training, the committee, and the code related to the four purposes. Training is ranked as the most useful tool for all four purposes. The committee is ranked second as useful for all four purposes, and the code is ranked third as useful for all four purposes.

Table 5.2

**Results of Survey to Describe The Manager Beliefs  
About the Usefulness of the Ethics Program**

N=27

Question	SA	A	NS	D	SD	*No. of Responses	Means
5. Gaining compliance has been aided by the:							
A. Ethics Code	20%	48%	16	16%	0%	N=25	3.70
B. Ethics Training	41%	41%	7%	11%	0%	N=27	4.12
C. Ethics Committee	23%	53%	12%	12%	0%	N=26	3.85
6. Utilization of moral principles has been aided by the:							
A. Ethics Code	13%	62%	8%	13%	4%	N=24	3.63
B. Ethics Training	27%	54%	15%	0%	4%	N=26	4.00
C. Ethics Committee	23%	53%	12%	12%	0%	N=27	3.85
7. Utilization of moral principles to shape ethical behavior has been aided by the:							
A. Ethics Code	23%	42%	23%	8%	4%	N=26	3.48
B. Ethics Training	38%	38%	15	9%	0%	N=26	4.05
C. Ethics Committee	19%	52%	22%	7%	0%	N=27	3.68
8. Challenging employees to act as moral agents has been aided by the:							
A. Ethics Code	12%	44%	24%	16%	4%	N=25	3.44
B. Ethics Training	33%	37%	18%	7%	5%	N=27	3.86
C. Ethics Committee	32%	28%	36%	4%	0%	N=25	3.78

\* Some managers did not answer all categories



**Table 5.3**

**Ranking the Purpose of the Program Related to Compliance,  
Moral Reasoning and Acting as Moral Agents**

Purpose of the Ethics Program

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Compliance	Training	Code	Committee
Moral Reasoning to guide decisions	Committee	Code	Training
Moral Reasoning to shape behavior	Training	Code	Committee
Acting as a Moral Agent	Committee	Training	Code

Table 5.4

**Ranking the Usefulness of the Program Related to Compliance,  
Moral Reasoning and Acting as Moral Agents**

Usefulness of the Ethics Program

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Compliance	Training	Committee	Code
Moral Reasoning to guide decisions	Training	Committee	Code
Moral Reasoning to shape behavior	Training	Committee	Code
Acting as a Moral Agent	Training	Committee	Code

### **Summary of Findings**

The following conclusion from an analysis of the data are possible:

- (1) The ethics code is the least useful element of the program.
- (2) Except for the ethics training program, compliance is the least purpose of the ethics program.
- (3) Managers believe strongly that the purpose of the program is to utilize moral principles to guide decisions and shape ethical behavior.
- (4) The ethics training and the ethics committee are the most useful elements.
- (5) A strong majority of managers believe the purpose of the ethics training and ethics committee is to challenge employees to act as moral agents.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research is to explore the common elements of the program at Austin State Hospital and to describe the managers beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the program. Table 6.1 summarizes the results. When faced with clinical, business, and even issues of life and death, the managers at Austin State Hospital do have access to a well designed ethics program. The ethics code, the ethics training, and the committee all have elements to facilitate the staff's ability to comply with rules and laws. Special attention is provided to remind staff of the need to avoid conflicts of interest related to gifts and contracts. The program clearly promotes the use of moral principles when making ethical decisions or shaping ethical behavior. Finally, the program strongly encourages employees to act as moral agents. Managers appear fortunate to have such a rich array of resources available to them when faced with challenging ethical dilemmas.

### **Common Elements of the Program**

The ethics code, the ethics training, and the ethics committee are all present in the ethics program at Austin State Hospital. The ethics code is a strong document which contains elements to encourage employees to comply with laws and rules, utilize moral principles to guide decisions and shape ethical behavior, and to act as moral agents. Both the ethics training program and the committee display compliance, moral principles, and encouragement to act as moral agents. In content form, the most explicit language for all four elements are contained

**Table 6.1. Summary of Results**

<b>The Common Elements of the Program</b>		
<b>Working Hypotheses</b>		<b>Source</b>
W.H.1: Compliance present		
W.H.1A.	The ethics code	Supported
W.H.1B.	The ethics training	Supported
W.H.1C.	The ethics committee	Supported
W.H.2: Moral principles to guide decisions		
W.H.2A.	The ethics code	Supported
W.H.2B.	The ethics training	Supported
W.H.2C.	The ethics committee	Supported
W.H.3: Moral principles to shape ethical behavior		
W.H.3A.	The ethics code	Supported
W.H.3B.	The ethics training	Supported
W.H.3C.	The ethics committee	Supported
W.H.4: Act as moral agent		
W.H.4A.	The ethics code	Supported
W.H.4B.	The ethics training	Supported
W.H.4C.	The ethics committee	Supported
<b>Purpose of the Program</b>		
1.	Compliance:	
A.	Code . . . . .	Slightly Agree
B.	Training . . . . .	Agree
C.	Committee . . . . .	Agree
2.	Moral principles to guide decisions:	
A.	Code . . . . .	Agree
B.	Training . . . . .	Agree
C.	Committee . . . . .	Strongly Agree

3.	Moral principles to shape behavior: A. Code . . . . . B. Training . . . . . C. Committee . . . . .	Agree Strongly Agree Agree
4.	Challenging employees to act as a moral agent: A. Code . . . . . B. Training . . . . . C. Committee . . . . .	Slightly Agree Agree Agree
<b>Usefulness of the Program</b>		
5.	Compliance aided by: A. Code . . . . . B. Training . . . . . C. Committee . . . . .	Slightly Agree Strongly Agree Agree
6.	Moral principles to guide decisions aided by: A. Code . . . . . B. Training . . . . . C. Committee . . . . .	Agree Strongly Agree Agree
7.	Moral principles to shape behavior: A. Code . . . . . B. Training . . . . . C. Committee . . . . .	Agree Agree Agree
8.	Challenging employees to act as a moral agent: A. Code . . . . . B. Training . . . . . C. Committee . . . . .	Slightly Agree Strongly Agree Agree

in the ethics code. Table 6.1 summarizes the results of the analysis of the common elements. The four working hypotheses are all supported.

### **Purpose and Usefulness of the Ethics Program**

Although the document analysis revealed that the ethics code contained strong components of compliance, utilization of ethical principles, and encouragement to act as moral agents, the managers beliefs indicates that the code is the least useful tool to support these purposes. The managers believe that the ethics training and ethics committee are the most useful elements. In general, the managers believe that utilizing moral principles to guide decisions and shape ethical behavior are the main purpose of the program. A relatively strong agreement among managers supports the idea that the purpose of the program is to encourage employees to act as moral agents.

One possible explanation for these results may be that the code is a written document standing somewhat isolated and seemingly disconnected to the staff, while the training program and committee are directly connected to familiar staff who teach ethics or serve as consultants to facilitate solving ethical dilemmas. One improvement may be to include annual training which includes a specific review of the Ethics Code. This annual training could strengthen the Ethics Program at Austin State Hospital.

### **Research Limitations**

Babbie notes that survey research has the tendency to provide superficial results (Babbie 1992, 287). This research included the survey of managers' beliefs about the purpose and

usefulness of the ethics program. This was a forced answer survey and did not include other influences that may contribute to the managers' beliefs. The four possible purposes of the program, although derived from the literature review, may not have included other possible purposes of ethics. This research did not address religious or social purposes of ethics programs.

The distinction between utilizing ethical principles and acting as moral agents is a complicated issue and may not have been clear to all the managers. Some of the surveys did not have all the possible answers checked, which may be an indication of the managers' confusion regarding the four purposes.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This research did answer the questions regarding the presence of the common elements and the managers belief regarding the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program. Further research may include other possible influences upon managers' understanding of the purpose of ethics, the possible methods to enhance a greater utilization of the ethics code, and an increase in the frequency of the training of ethics.

### **Conclusion**

The managers at Austin State Hospital do have a substantial array of resources available to them for assistance when faced with ethical dilemmas. Senior management may wish to expand the utilization of the code, increase training, and continue to remind staff of the existence and availability of the ethics committee.



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**APPENDIX A**

Interview Questions

## Interview Questions

1. Does the committee/training have elements of compliance?
2. Does the committee/training have elements which guide employers to use moral reasoning when making ethical decisions?
3. Does the committee/training have elements which use moral reasoning when shaping employee ethical behavior?
4. Does the committee/training have elements which encourage employees to act as moral agents?

**APPENDIX B**

Letter and Survey Questionnaire

January 31, 2000

Dear Colleague:

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Public Administration, I have to complete an applied research project.

The research is intended to explore the contents of the ethics program and to describe the manager's beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the program at Austin State Hospital. The program is currently comprised of an ethical code, an ethics training, and an ethics committee. I am interested in your beliefs about the purpose of the three components and your beliefs about the usefulness of each component. A literature review of public ethics indicated that ethics programs were for: (1) encouraging people to comply with laws and rules, (2) to use moral principles, such as social equality or fiscal accountability to guide ethical decisions; (3) to use the principles to shape ethical behavior, and (4) to act as a moral agent, which means one embodies in their character such virtues as honor, benevolence, or justice. There are no right or wrong answers to the eight questions. My research is an empirical study of beliefs about the purpose and usefulness of the current program. The results of the research will remain anonymous.

I would sincerely appreciate you taking a few minutes of your time to complete the enclosed survey. Each question's response is valuable all responses are needed. Enclosed is a return envelope for your convenience. I appreciate your assistance with this research. I also appreciate your returning the survey as soon as possible. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Wayne Thornton  
908A Loma Lane  
Marble Falls, TX 78654  
Telephone: 830-693-1740

## QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is being conducted to describe the beliefs of management about the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program at Austin State Hospital. A Likert Scale will be utilized to measure the beliefs of management about the purpose and usefulness of the ethics program at Austin State Hospital.

Instructions:

Besides each of the questions presented below, please answer with one of the following responses: (SA) Strongly Agree; (A) Agree; (NS) Not Sure; (D) Disagree; (SD) Strongly Disagree

Questions	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1. I Believe that compliance with laws and rules is the purpose of the:					
A. Ethics Code					
B. Ethics training					
C. Ethics committee					
2. I believe that using moral principles to guide ethical decision making is the purpose of the:					
A. Ethics Code					
B. Ethics training					
C. Ethics committee					
3. I believe that using moral principles to shape ethical behavior is the purpose of the:					
A. Ethics Code					
B. Ethics training					
C. Ethics committee					
4. I believe that challenging employees to act as moral agents is the purpose of the:					
A. Ethics Code					
B. Ethics training					
C. Ethics committee					



Questions	SA	A	NS	D	SD
5. Gaining compliance has been aided by the:					
A. Ethics Code					
B. Ethics training					
C. Ethics committee					
6. Utilization of moral principles when making ethical decisions has been aided by the:					
A. Ethics Code					
B. Ethics training					
C. Ethics committee					
7. Utilization of moral principles shaping ethical behavior has been aided by the:					
A. Ethics Code					
B. Ethics training					
C. Ethics committee					
8. Challenging employees to act as moral agents has been aided by the:					
A. Ethics Code					
B. Ethics training					
C. Ethics committee					

**APPENDIX C**

Code of Ethics, Austin State Hospital

they have been deemed competent. Patients will not be subjected to unnecessary treatment or therapy for the benefit of any trainees.

Clarification:

All patients and staff have the right to refuse to participate in research without compromising any other services. A patient's treatment will not be affected by his/her refusal to participate in a research study.

Legally adequate consent will be obtained from any individual (or guardian) to participate in research. There will be no pressure to participate in research.

**AS STATE EMPLOYEES**

We do not benefit from state employment through the acceptance of gifts or favors or through our involvement with other economic activities, even if performed on our own time. We use state property only for state business.

Clarification:

Any employees with a financial interest in a potential contract or vendor must declare their interest to their supervisor and other administrative staff as appropriate and must remove themselves from the contractor/vendor selection process.

Employees do not accept gifts or favors from vendors or potential vendors if the gift or favor will influence or create a perception of influence

Employees do not accept gifts or favors from patients or patients' families.

The TEX-AN Line, cell phones, state-issued credit cards, copy machines, fax machines, and computer systems are only used for state business.

**AS MEMBERS OF A WORKING COMMUNITY**

We honor and respect the wide variety of differences among us. We treat one another with honesty, integrity, courtesy and kindness.

Clarification:

Employees will refrain from committing sexual harassment, will not make racial slurs, and will treat all people respectfully regardless of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or position within the organization.

**ETHICS COMMITTEE**

All staff and patients may freely access the Austin State Hospital Ethics Committee without fear of retaliation or reprisal.

To request consultation, contact the Client Rights Office at 419-2142.

Revised August, 1999



**CODE OF ETHICS**

**AUSTIN STATE HOSPITAL**

As employees of Austin State Hospital, we are committed to carrying out our duties with integrity, honesty, fairness, and diligence. We recognize our responsibilities to the community, staff, and consumers while performing our different roles.

#### AS PROVIDERS OF INPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH CARE

We will adhere to the ethical principles and values of integrity, confidentiality, autonomy, justice, beneficence (do good), and non-maleficence (do no harm).

We respect the rights, the dignity, and the well-being of our patients. We honor their privacy. We protect them against any form of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. We acknowledge their right to make choices whenever possible, including their right to refuse to perform work in or for the hospital.

##### Clarification:

- We work proactively to reduce occurrences of abuse and neglect through improving our skills in therapeutic communication and reporting system problems that contribute to abuse and neglect.

- Confidentiality policies and procedures are followed.

- Patients may consent to all procedures and medication as allowed by law. Any conflict in this area will be referred to the Austin State Hospital Ethics Committee.

- Other than cleaning up after themselves, patients will not perform work without Fair Labor Standards compensation.

- All staff, clinical and non-clinical, will maintain appropriate job-related boundaries in their interactions with patients and patients' families.

#### AS PROVIDERS OF MEDICAL CARE

We recognize the autonomy of patients, the right of those with capacity to make their own health care decisions, and the right to refuse medical treatment they do not want.

##### Clarification:

- Individuals with decision-making capacity may refuse treatment even if the refusal may result in death.

- Patients have the right to execute an advance directive and durable power of attorney for health care decisions.

#### AS PROVIDERS OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

We will strengthen the hospital treatment effort by wholeheartedly devoting our energies to producing a quality work product.

#### AS PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Our professional staff is composed of persons who are licensed, credentialed, registered, or certified in clinical and administrative areas of expertise. We will fulfill our duties consistent with the principles, values, and obligations established in our respective professional codes of ethics.

##### Clarification:

- All professional staff and professional trainees will be knowledgeable about and comply with their respective codes of ethics.

- The relevant professional board will be notified in writing if an individual is considered to be in violation of his/her professional standards.

#### AS A PUBLIC INSTITUTION

Recognizing our position of public trust, we will fairly and accurately represent our services and capabilities to the public.

We will work within the state system to ensure maximum utilization of our services to those with identified needs.

We make decisions about admissions, discharges, and transfers solely in the interest of our patients. We do not enter into contractual agreements with organizations or individuals when there is potential for a conflict of interest. In all our billing and reimbursement practices we submit honest and detailed accounting. Complaints are handled with courtesy and dispatch.

##### Clarification:

- We will not claim an unrealistic length of stay or services we do not provide for the purpose of procuring contracts.

- Quality treatment will be delivered in an efficient and effective manner.

- We will counsel patients about their financial responsibility and assist them with accessing entitled resources. We will never deny admission or pursue a transfer because of their indigent status.

- Hospital contracts are awarded to companies and individuals based solely on their ability to provide a quality product at the lowest possible cost.

- Patients who believe they have been unfairly charged for services will receive a prompt investigation and will be notified in writing of the findings.

#### AS A TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTION

All patients and staff have the right to refuse to participate in research without compromising any other services or functions.

Every professional clinical trainee affiliated at our hospital will perform only those interventions for which