

Arsht Research on Ethics and Community Grant

The “SPEC Check”: The Development of a Tool to Promote Ethical-Reflective Community Practice in Human Service Organizations

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Abstract

While the psychological disciplines and helping professions have strong ethical codes of conduct for working with individual clients, behaving ethically toward individual participants does not guarantee an ethical action at the social level (Prilleltensky, 1994). For a variety of historical reasons the majority of agencies serving disadvantaged individuals and families concentrate on deficits, reactive interventions, and expert-driven approaches that strive to change one person at a time instead of changing the conditions that lead to suffering and psychosocial problems in the first place. The concept of personal individual ethics can be extended to the social and cultural environment (Pettifor, 1996) so that human service practices place emphasis on approaches that build on individual and community strengths, are preventive, are empowering and foster community change (SPEC). This project utilizes a participatory, competing values process that allows program personnel to reflect on their current program practices through the SPEC lens. This action research process and tool will be tested and implemented in partnership with five local organizations as part of a three-year action research project.

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