Ethics in Criminal Justice Administration Analysis

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Abstract

The definition of ethics is simple; ethics is a moral duty in making decisions of individuals in professional, unprofessional employment as well as any human thought that questions what is right and what is wrong. Professional ethics is also easy to define as it is adapting to a work environment and the rules and standards set forth within the profession. This paper will discuss the relationship of ethics, professional behavior in criminal justice administration and explain the role of critical thinking with regard to the relationship of ethics, and professional behavior along with a proposal for a seminar in ethics training.
Good character, courage, integrity, responsibility, and honesty are words used to describe a person with ethics. Criminal justice employees should represent the highest level of ethical conduct on or off duty. According to Smith B.B., (2013), “The foundation to real world ethics has to come from management. If they really want an ethical organization, police managers have to take a long look in the mirror and decide to hold themselves to an even higher standard than they do their personnel”.

Integrity is essential to successful human understanding as it can label an agency, an institution or a person. Integrity is a gauge for competence, confidence, trust, and professionalism. Criminal justice administrators must ensure that their officers understand, and follow integrity as it could possibly damage the reputation of the entire police force. On or off duty the behavior of one officer reflects positively or negatively on the administrator.

The nature of ethics and the role it can play within the criminal justice system can be referring as The Law Enforcement Code of Ethics. According to Police Codes (2012), As Criminal justice professionals, “it is their fundamental duty to serve mankind; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation, and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and to respect the Constitutional rights of all men to liberty, equality and justice” (Law Enforcement Code of Ethics).

Critical thinking plays a large role in regard to the relationship of ethics and professional behavior. It is a main component when deciding whether a claim is true or false. Critical thinking is a learned skill which must be practiced, and portrayed on a professional level. During the critical thinking process, the officer must remember his or her professional ethics as this will aid him or her in making the correct decision.
Conjoining criminal justice and critical thinking enables law enforcement personnel to perform his or her duties more effectively in regards to making a decision based on what is fact and what is fiction. Exhibiting the ability to attain a critical approach, when dealing with an ethical problem, is vital in law enforcement.

Moral decisions made by criminal justice officers in the past have shown there to be a need for a seminar in ethics training. An ethics training seminar will be required for all criminal justice administrators and staff. There will be five areas of ethical conduct stressed in the seminar, the reason why these five areas have been chosen, and the expected benefits of area.

Proposal for a seminar:

Police officers are held to a higher standard of behavior, because they are wardens of the public trust (Ethics Training for Police, 2006). Police have the power to utilize force as well as take away statutory privileges when it is justified by law. “They take an oath of office, are expected to comply with professional codes of ethics, and are subject to various laws, rules, and regulations” (Ethics Training for Police, 2006).

The proposed ethics training seminar will aid the police in the following:

- Readily recognize an ethical problem or dilemma
- Identify various options to address the particular issue involved
- Make a rational and ethically sound choice of which option to choose
- Take prompt action based upon that choice
- Accept responsibility for the outcome

Police professionals cannot simply think ethically; they must also act ethically (Ethics Training for Police, 2006). In order for ethics training to be a success, there must be a clear understanding of the purpose as well as supply instruments that will help the officer to think and
act ethically on or off duty. The five areas of ethical conduct that has been chosen for this seminar are important for the officer to know and understand and practice daily. If an officer does not know the value of the training which, is having the community view the police force as fair then that officer is going to be the one who may bring disgrace upon the agency.

The police agency being viewed as far to the community is going to be achieved by each officer acting ethically, which is basically fairly. Police must treat each individual with equal treatment in order to be viewed by the community as having ethics. Along with ethics police, and police professionals must have integrity in their public and private lives. According to, Ethics Training for Police, (2006), “Merely complying with applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures is not necessarily enough to avoid liability, partly because these constraints do not cover every conceivable situation that might arise. Again, the prudent exercise of discretion and sound, ethical decision making can compensate for lapses in judgment or deficient performance”.

Ethics training should require excellence in police professional behavior having no room for excuses for behavior that is less than what is required. There should also be an accountability system in place that not only holds accountable those who are not living up to the expectations of the police force but, for those who are reaching the excellence mark and beyond. Ethical decision making involves options, choices, and consequences. The police professional faces a situation requiring an ethical decision, considers various options, decides upon one of the options, implements the decision, and experiences the outcome (Ethics Training for Police, 2006).

Sometimes an individual does see when he or she is in an ethical situation, or they are unable to remember the options, sometimes the choices make no sense due to emotional stress, or that individual officers choses to outright ignore the correct decision and do what he or she
feels like doing at that moment. This is an officer who has no ethics, and may end up giving the entire department a bad name. The department will lose trust in the agency making it difficult for police to do their duty efficiently. Once the trust from the community is lost, it is very difficult to gain that trust back. Undoubtedly, ethical thinking is simpler than ethically acting. Acting ethically takes guts as choosing to do the right thing may be agonizing and come at a very high cost, both personally and professionally.

Ethics in criminal justice administration is essential to police, administrators, the community, and the entire agency. Ethical issues take place every day and they do not only happen to those in the criminal justice field. Ethical issues happen to everyday individuals as well, and we all have to make ethical decisions at some point in our lives whether it is professional or personal. We have discussed that ethical issues are the question of what is right and what is wrong as well as how we are to act. Having ethics also coincides with being fair, we all want to be treated fairly by others Therefore, we should treat others fare as well.

Those who are employed in the criminal justice field are expected to make ethical decisions every day, know what ethical decision best fits the situation, and be prepared to face the outcome of the choice he or she has made. If it is a true ethical decision the outcome will be welcoming but, if it is a non-ethical decision the outcome is not going to be in favor of the officer. Knowing when one is in an ethical situation, and being able to submit an appropriate decision takes knowledge in regards to ethical issues. It is vital for criminal justice professionals to have a complete understanding of ethics in order to make the correct decision.
All ethical codes look for two main integrities: ethics of professionalism and ethics of public service, which are nonnegotiable and essential because not having ethics of professionalism and ethics of public service, the public organization loses the community trust.
References

