

ETHICAL REFLECTION GUIDE

ATTRueQ

*Association des travailleurs et travailleuses de rue du Québec
Quebec Street Outreach Workers' Association*



ETHICAL REFLECTION GUIDE FOR STREET WORKERS

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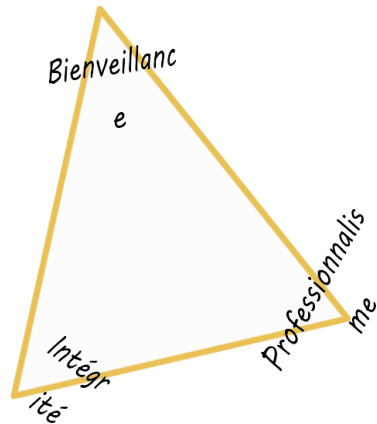
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“If a social practice is contrary to human rights, it cannot be considered an ethical practice.”

Sylviane Agacinski

The *Association des travailleurs et travailleuses de rue du Québec (ATTRueQ)* is the organization that represents street outreach workers¹ in the province of Quebec. The goal of ATTRueQ is to support the establishment and development of working conditions and practices in street outreach work that are of high quality and continually improving. The vision of ATTRueQ is for street outreach work to be recognized and fully integrated among the services available to the population of Quebec.

Introduction

Commenté [ED1]: Triangle: Compassion, Professionalism, Integrity

Street outreach is primarily a **co-construction approach** which is grounded in the community and adapted to the situation and the context. **Co-constructing** implies a connection, a relationship based on respect and trust, the creation of common ground of shared space and meaning, a mutual sense of responsibility and commitment to the outcomes, which are intended to empower others.

The following values are fundamental to the decisions and actions of street outreach workers:

Compassion, integrity, and professionalism.

¹ In this document, the term “street outreach workers” includes community workers, social service workers, field workers, professionals, and people who do not belong to any of these professions but work from a similar relational approach and share the values of ATTRueQ. (Note: This is a translation of ATTRueQ’s original French document. The French original uses the feminine form of the titles and professionals; the English translation uses “they” as the pronoun for a person whose gender identity is not specified as well as those whose gender identity it reflects.)

“There are no ethical propositions, only ethical actions.”
Ludwig Wittgenstein

This ethical reflection guide is structured according to the three fundamental values. It was designed to help street outreach workers work in a way that is consistent with these values. It is a practical tool intended to ensure that the reflection is rigorous and based on common points of reference. Given that flexibility and constant change are characteristic of this type of work, it is important for outreach workers to develop judgment and discernment. This tool will help them ground their decisions when they are working in grey areas. The guide can be used by individuals or groups to reflect on situations they may face, encourage them to make fair and reasonable decisions, and deal with the uncertainties in their work.

Ethical reflection is an essential part of doing street outreach work, and the effort to develop this competency is a constant, lifelong project.

Guide

Regardless of how much experience they have, no one ever finishes the work of developing ethical competency. This guide is meant to accompany the ongoing learning process. It is a resource, a reference tool, or a study guide with questions that can be asked to avoid the blind spots that occur in complex situations. The guide is a starting point for this essential process of ethical reflection and can be used by each person in the way that works best for them.

In this guide, you will find guiding principles for approaches you can take in your daily work, as well as some examples of the questions street outreach workers can ask themselves in a situation in which it is difficult to determine what action to take. In the appendices there are two ethical models, a decision tree that can be used in work situations, and a list of the primary laws that may apply to an outreach worker's reflections.

Co-construction: at the heart of our work...

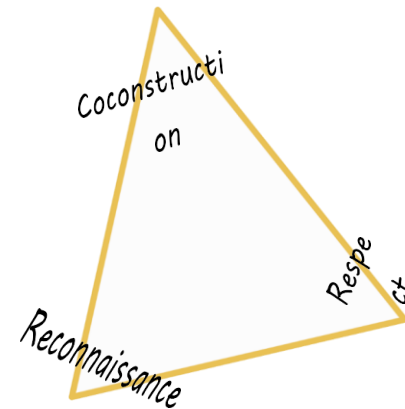
Street outreach work is a process of co-construction, the mutual development of a relationship based on trust between the worker and the individual or group they are working with. Workers need to recognize and respect the other person's perspective, in order to create a common ground that is empowering for them.

"Thinking about ethics means thinking about relationships among distinct individuals."

Dominique Depenne

What co-constructing means

- Street outreach workers do not impose themselves on people when their presence is not needed or wanted. They follow the individual rhythms and changes in the lives of the people they work with and involve them in all decisions that concern them. Every person has the right to choose the type of help they want to receive.
- An outreach worker's actions are based on the principle of reciprocity, or mutual respect. The helping process includes shared responsibility and a commitment to the relationships among the individual, the group, and the outreach worker who are working together.



Commenté [ED2]: Co-construction, Respect, Recognition

Compassion

Compassion is a fundamental value in street outreach. As a result, an outreach worker needs to **consider the people they work with holistically: to be caring and attentive towards them, to contribute to their wellbeing, to accept each person as they are and meet them where they are, to be non-judgmental, understanding, open, curious, and inclusive.**

Compassion requires the outreach worker to judge each situation according to the individual reality of the person they are working with rather than according to social norms. It also means putting the needs of others before their own needs.

It is essential for outreach workers to adapt to the rules of the environment in which they work and, at the same time, to respect their own boundaries.

Compassion implies a number of practices for outreach workers, including

Respecting commitments to others

- A street outreach worker may decide on fair and reasonable grounds to refuse to work with or stop working with an individual or a group. If they do so, they must do everything they can to find appropriate alternatives that will ensure the wellbeing of the people affected. Everything possible must be done to avoid the negative impact that interrupting or discontinuing their services may have on the lives of others.
- A street outreach worker's actions are based on the principle that every human being has the right to be in relation and to belong.

Adapting communication to each person

- A street outreach worker adapts their vocabulary and their communication styles to the people they are interacting with in order to ensure that each person understands the issues and actions that affect them.
- By doing so, the worker ensures that people have understood the situation clearly and that they give informed consent to their involvement in the relationship, as their participation must be voluntary.

Guiding Questions

- Do I know enough about the environment to understand the person's behaviour? What additional knowledge do I still need?
- Does my point of view about the situation take the specific culture of the environment into account?
- Do I place my priority on what the person wants and considers best for themselves at this point in their life?
- Am I certain that the person has given free and informed consent to be in this relationship with me?

Integrity

Integrity is a fundamental value in street outreach. As a result, an outreach worker needs to **be self-aware and sensitive to their own needs, aware of and sensitive to the needs of others, and aware of and sensitive to the environment they are in. They must, at all times, strive to be consistent in their words and their actions and to recognize their strengths, weaknesses, and boundaries.**

Integrity implies a number of practices for outreach workers, including

Preventing and disclosing situations in which there is a conflict of interest

A street outreach worker avoids putting themselves in a conflict of interest. When it is impossible to avoid this situation, they manage it carefully, conscientiously, and transparently. They keep their focus on the primary goal of helping/equipping the person they are working with, before seeking to meet their own needs.

A **conflict of interest** is defined here in a broad sense and refers to any situation in which there is a **relationship of trust** between a street outreach worker and one or more individuals, and in which an interest may interfere with the outreach worker's **judgment** in performing their duties. The interest may be financial, material, professional, personal, emotional, and/or of another nature (definition inspired by Davis, 2001, p. 8).

Here are some situations in which a street outreach worker must pay greater attention to interests that may cloud their judgment.

- A street outreach worker refrains from taking advantage of or personally benefitting in any way from the relationship they have with a person or a group.
- A street worker cannot, in any situation, use their job or role for the purpose of propaganda or to obtain for themselves or attempt to provide to others any unjustified or illegal benefit.
- When talking about their work or role in public, a street outreach worker avoids exaggerating or making any statement that is sensationalistic or distorts reality, as it could undermine the credibility of the profession and the relationships of trust and confidence that have been established.

Knowing how to adapt to the context

A street outreach worker exercises their judgment while taking into consideration the organization's requirements and the responsibilities of their employment relationship.

Guiding Questions

- Am I putting my own interests before those of the person I am trying to help?
- Are my actions consistent with my own words, even when this does not give me any advantage?
- Have I been transparent about my boundaries and any limitations to my ability to help?

Professionalism

Professionalism is a fundamental value in street outreach. As a result, an outreach worker needs to be careful to use **analysis, reflection, and discernment in every decision they make, to be rigorous in their actions, adaptable, and to continuously learn and develop their competencies.**

Professionalism implies a number of practices for outreach workers, including

Demonstrating competency at all times

- A street outreach worker possesses the knowledge and skills needed to be completely competent in the role and constantly strives to improve them. They participate in activities and acquire resources to increase their knowledge and skills (such as training sessions, clinical practicums, peer support, learning materials, professional development, etc.). They also assess their actions and the repercussions they may have on the lives of people and groups they are working with. Ongoing and frequent evaluation of their practices is appropriate:
 - *Through introspection:* the practice of street outreach requires regular, critical reflection on their role and their own experiences.
 - *With colleagues and others:* discussions can reach a level of trust that generates honest and authentic discussion about each worker's actions. An outreach team or peer network can work together to create a positive environment that fosters shared critical reflection on the practices of all members.
- A street outreach worker recognizes that difficulties and personal conflicts may interfere with their attitudes or their work. When personal problems occur, the worker is careful to discuss the situation with their employer to determine whether they should suspend, restrict, or conclude these activities. A street outreach worker resigns from their role if they find themselves in a situation that may compromise the quality of their working relationships.
- A street outreach worker does not make false claims about their competency.

Professionalism

Respecting confidentiality

- A street outreach worker protects the right of those they work with to confidentiality. This means that they communicate information about these people only with their consent or when required to do so by the law (see references in the Appendix).
- A street outreach worker is also discreet and tactful about the personal lives of those they work with and respects their privacy.
- When an outreach worker gives confidential information to others on their team, they give the information only to those for whom it is useful, necessary, and relevant to the goals of the services the team is providing, and only when knowledge of this information will not cause prejudice towards the person involved.
- Confidentiality must be maintained indefinitely.

Remaining in close contact

- A street outreach worker is careful about the personal information they share about themselves, to avoid having their own values and ideals influence the choices of the group or individual they are working with.
- An outreach worker is careful to protect the relationship they have with the people they work with and at the same time protects their own physical and mental integrity, by using good judgment in setting boundaries where self-disclosure and private property are concerned.
- They are vigilant about their own safety.

Professionalism

Respecting the profession

- A street outreach worker acts in solidarity with other outreach workers. They offer colleagues support, perspectives, and recommendations when a colleague consults them and responds within a reasonable length of time.
- If they witness a breach of professionalism or inappropriate behaviour on the part of a colleague in their outreach work, they are encouraged to inform the person involved, their employer, or the ATTRueQ monitoring committee.
- A street outreach worker does not hesitate to challenge actions that appear to undermine or compromise their role when they have concerns.
- Outside of the context of their work, the outreach worker is careful not to behave in a way that may discredit them or their profession and does not take part in activities that could jeopardize their credibility as a street outreach worker.
- When taking part in activities outside their job, workers are careful to specify the capacity or role in which they are acting and to behave appropriately.

Guiding Questions

- Do I feel I am able to act carefully and wisely in the circumstances? If not, what resources can I use?
- Do I regularly reflect on my practices to improve them?
- Could my behaviour harm or jeopardize the perception of street outreach workers?
- When I am involved with a person, can they rely on me on an ongoing basis?
- Am I putting my personal interests before those of my job?
- Am I careful to respect the commitments I make in my work?

Signature

I, _____ certify that I
have read the ATTRueQ Ethical Reflection Guide carefully. I subscribe completely to the working values of street outreach. I
understand the importance of using this tool to guide and examine my practices.

Signature : _____

Signé le : _____

Commenté [ED3]: Signé le : = Dated

APPENDIX 1: Standards and Laws Which May Affect Street Outreach Workers

This list is not exhaustive

**Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, Quebec (L.R.Q. C-12) – c. 9
professional secrecy**

**Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (R.S.C. article 10) – Arrest
or detention**

Criminal Code (R.S.C. (1985), c. C-46)

Privacy Act (R.S.C. (1985), c. P-21)

Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the protection of personal information (L.R.Q., c. A-21)

Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act (L.C. 2017, c. 4)

Act respecting health services and social services (c. s-4.2)

Youth protection act (P-34.1)

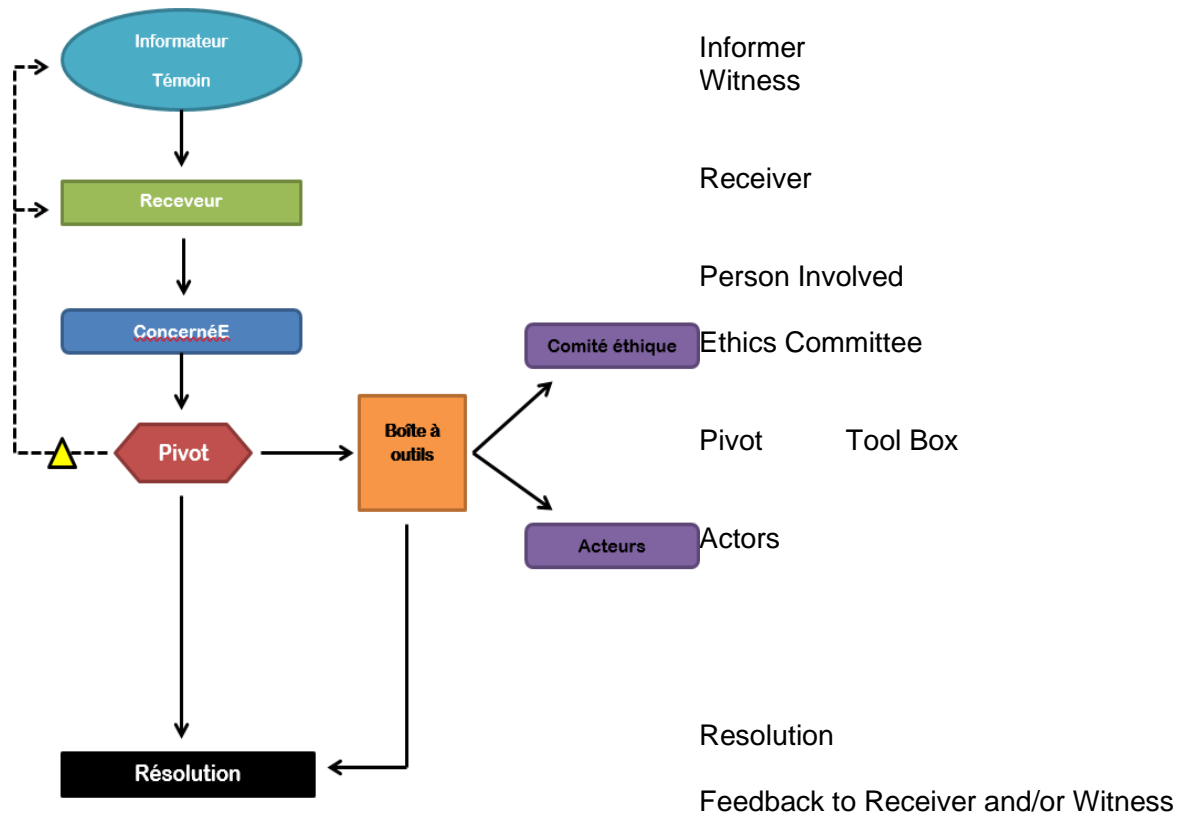
Youth Criminal Justice Act (S.C. 2002, c. 1)


Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (S.C. 1996, c. 19)

Commenté [ED4]: citation corrigée

APPENDIX 2: Ethical Decision Tree

Commenté [ED5]: See also: <https://trilliumhealthpartners.ca/aboutus/Documents/IDEA-Framework-THP.pdf>



 *Rétroaction au receveur et/ou au témoin*

APPENDICES 3: Tools for Ethical Reflection

1) Decision Facilitation Model (inspired by Langlois, 2014)

STEP 1: DESCRIBE THE REAL SITUATION

- There is one problem, and many understandings of it
- State the problem concisely, without superfluous information
- Include necessary nuances
- Do not assume intentions
- Attention to biases!
- Decide what the problem is. Formulate the question we are wondering about.

STEP 2 : ANALYZE

Identify the clinical, normative, cultural, organizational/contextual reference points

- List the legal and regulatory provisions involved
- List the key facts about the decision to be made
- Identify the people (or the groups / organizations) directly or indirectly affected
- Determine which values are in conflict and explain why
- Define the ethical concerns involved (related to the street outreach worker's role in this situation)

*****Remember the values of street outreach work: compassion, professionalism, and integrity.*****

STEP 3: IDENTIFY OPTIONS

Determine possible approaches and examine them

- Identify at least three options, avoiding binary judgments (i.e. whether they are good or bad)
- List probable or very probable
- consequences, both negative and positive, for each option (for self, others, the organization, the profession)
- Consider how various elements interconnect

STEP 4: DECIDE

Choose and determine the best approach

- Clarify intentions: striving for a fair resolution to the problem (consistent with the values and principles designed to guide our work)
- Decide how to explain the decision

*****Ethical reasoning, normative and strategic reasoning.*****

STEP 5: ACT AND PREVENT

Take the chosen approach

- Decide on the preventative measures to take

3) Ethical Deliberation Tool (inspired by Boisvert et al., 2003 and Legault, 2003, and by the CHU de Québec / Université Laval's Ethical Deliberation Tool)

Ethical deliberation is based on a collaborative and inclusive approach and is used in an ethical dilemma, which is a conflict of values that causes difficulties in decision-making. As far as possible, the parties affected by the situation take part in the process of finding a solution.

*****Note: it is always possible to go back to a previous step at any point of the process.*****

Step 1: Identify the key facts

Participants start by agreeing on a single understanding of the situation (facts of the matter).

Questions that can help at this stage:

- What are the main aspects of the situation?
- Is there one problem, or are there several?
- What is the direction in which are we spontaneously leaning?
- Which people, groups, and organizations are affected?
- What consequences could our actions have on the parties affected or involved?
- What are the main rules or standards that apply?

Step 2: Identify the values

Participants work together to identify the emotions and values involved.

Questions that can help at this stage:

- What emotions are at play?
- What are the main values involved?
 - o Consider each party affected by the situation
- What is the main conflict of values?

Step 3: Identify the priorities for the decision

Participants agree on the main criteria that will guide the decision.

Questions that can help at this stage:

- In this situation, is there a value that is a priority and on which the parties participating in the deliberation have reached consensus?
- If so, what are the reasons for this value being a priority?
- If not, what value would you like to make a priority after the deliberation process, and why?
- What could you do to apply this value to your decision?

Step 4: Act and communicate

Participants determine the action to take, which should be consistent with the primary value, and they ensure communication throughout the process and afterwards.

Questions that can help at this stage:

- Has everyone involved in the ethical deliberation been heard? Has everyone participated in the decision-making process?
- How should the decision be shared? What actions can be put in place to reach a greater consensus?
- What can we do in the future to promote a collective deliberation process?
- Are there structural or systemic changes you could make to reduce the ethical tensions experienced in this type of situation?

References

Davis, M. 2001. "Introduction," in Davis, M. and A. Stark (ed.), *Conflict of Interest in the Professions*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 3-19.

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