

Teaching Ethical Standards and Practice within Pre-Service and In-Service Interpreter Education Programs

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Appendix C: Sample Case Studies

General Case Study: “In the Best Interest of the Children”

J. Smith has four children; three of the children have different fathers, one of whom is incarcerated. Ms. Smith is Deaf, as are two of her children. Ms. Smith lives in subsidized housing, is unemployed, and attending school. She receives AFDC. Three years ago she received treatment and completed a program for drug addiction. One of her children has difficulties in school and is in a special class. The youngest child is two years old and Ms. Smith may be pregnant again. Ms. Smith’s family lives nearby. Her mother lives alone in government housing. The rest of her family lives within a ten-mile radius—two brothers and two sisters. Ms. Smith’s two-year-old deaf son is in a nursery program. Nursery program workers called the Department of Social Services to report that the two-year-old was being brought to the nursery for the last week in soiled diapers and dirty clothes. When the assigned investigative worker went out with you (as the interpreter) to discuss the situation with Ms. Smith, she refused to speak with the worker. The DSS worker is now considering filing a court petition for the child to be placed in protective custody.

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of feelings do you immediately experience when reading this scenario?
2. What do you predict is Ms. Smith’s educational background?
3. What would you identify as the main issues in this family’s situation?
4. What assumptions come to mind about Ms. Smith, the father(s), and/or her family regarding the following?
 - Marital Status
 - Economic Status/ Class
 - Family Background
 - Ethnicity
 - Future Prospects
 - Parenting Abilities

5. Is the investigator from DSS correct to bring this family's situation to the attention of the court?
6. What cultural differences might account for some of the facts in this scenario?
7. What core cultural values influence your observations about this scenario?

Consider your answers to the case study in terms of the following FACTUAL BASIS for the Smith case.

Factual Basis for the Smith Case

Ms. Smith is currently married for the second time. Her husband was let go from a very good job almost a year ago due to a re-location of the company to another state. He has been without work for the whole time, although actively looking for permanent work as a brick mason. For the past three months, he has been working, doing roofing with his cousin in another city. He comes home at least every other weekend to help take care of household bills and visit with the family. They have a two-year-old who is deaf and they may be expecting another child. Ms. Smith's first husband died several years ago in a severe auto accident. She and her first husband had one child together, plus adopted an older child who was abandoned by a member of the family. Ms. Smith was injured in the accident that killed her husband and suffers today from the pain of a broken back and numerous other injuries. She had become addicted to painkillers, but is now clean. She participates in a Pain Clinic program to help her manage the pain she experiences everyday. She has started a new quarter at the community college, where she is entered in a computer technology program. Her first class is at 7:30 AM. Her older son, who is 17, agreed to help her out by taking the other two kids to school each day. He drops the two year old at his daycare program at 8:00AM each day and picks him up after school. He drives himself and his sister to school by 8:30AM. Ms. Smith's family is very close. Her mother is 87 and a retired schoolteacher who was married to her dad for almost 60 years. Her brothers and sisters are all married, work, have children, and live in different parts of the city. They are Caucasian.

Now, consider the following questions.

1. How do your responses fit given the 'fuller' case facts?
2. What biases or stereotypes might have been revealed in your responses and those of your peers?
3. What do you think are the source of your biases or stereotypes?

Interpreter-Specific Case Study: “A Token of Appreciation”

Jill is a nationally certified interpreter who works as an interpreter in private practice. She begins accepting regular interpreting assignments from a computer software company who has a few deaf employees. It's difficult for this company to find qualified interpreters so they are eager to make Jill happy. One day, a supervisor takes Jill aside. He offers her two company tickets to see a baseball game the next weekend. Another time, he slips her an employee gym pass that gains her access to the company pool and gym so she can exercise after work. Finally, she is offered some free software that she could use in her interpreting business to make scheduling and billing much easier.

1. What is your initial reaction to this case study?
2. What key issues emerge for you?
3. What ethical tenet is jeopardized in this situation? Why?
4. What might Jill want to consider in terms of her potential long-term relationship with this company and its deaf employees?
5. What recommendations and/or solutions can you provide to Jill?