

University of Arkansas

Advanced Standing MSW Program Case Study

Navigating Cultural Differences and Ethical Practice in Healthcare Advocacy

Purpose of the Case Study

This case study is designed to assess your ability to analyze a complex social work situation, apply professional ethics, consider cultural and systemic factors, use scholarly evidence, and communicate your ideas clearly in writing.

After reading the case, write a 4 to 5 page paper addressing each of the four required areas listed below. Use the four areas as major headings in your paper. Your response should focus on what you would consider, how you would approach the situation as a social work professional, and the reasoning supporting your decisions. There is not necessarily one correct response; we are interested in your ability to identify competing considerations, center the client, apply ethical reasoning, and support your approach with evidence.

Assignment Requirements

- Write a 4 to 5 page paper. The cover page and reference page are not included in the page count.
- Include a cover page with your name, the MSW program for which you are applying, and the title of the case study.
- Use double spacing, 1-inch margins, and either Times New Roman or Arial font.
- Use the four required areas below as major headings in your paper.
- Use at least three peer-reviewed academic sources in addition to the NASW Code of Ethics and applicable Arkansas social work ethics/standards of practice.
- Use current academic literature when possible. Sources published within the past 10 years are preferred unless an older source is especially relevant.
- Cite all sources correctly and include a reference page.
- Write clearly and professionally, with attention to organization, grammar, and usage.

Original Work

The paper must represent your own original work. It may not be written, rewritten, or generated by another person or by generative artificial intelligence (AI). Follow any additional University of Arkansas admissions guidance regarding the use of spelling, grammar, or editing tools.

How Your Writing Will Be Evaluated

- Following Instructions: Adherence to the assignment requirements and completion of all four required areas.

- **Thoroughness and Organization:** A complete, logical, and well-organized response.
- **Critical Thinking and Analysis:** Thoughtful identification of key issues, competing considerations, and the rationale for your proposed approach.
- **Application of Social Work Ethics and Values:** Appropriate application of professional ethical standards and client-centered social work practice.
- **Use of Evidence:** Effective integration of scholarly literature and professional standards to support your analysis.
- **Professional Writing:** Clear, professional writing with appropriate grammar, usage, and citation practices.

Case Study

Background

You are a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) practitioner at a community health clinic serving a diverse population, including many immigrants and refugees. Your role is to provide case management and advocacy for clients navigating the healthcare system. One of your clients, Mrs. Hana Alavi, is a 55-year-old woman who recently immigrated to the United States from Iran. She speaks limited English and relies heavily on her adult daughter, Sara, for communication and decision-making.

Mrs. Alavi has been diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer, and her oncologist recommends a lumpectomy followed by radiation therapy. During a recent meeting with the healthcare team, Sara expressed concern that her mother is hesitant to proceed with treatment because of religious and cultural beliefs related to bodily integrity and medical intervention. Mrs. Alavi has also indicated that she wants to explore traditional healing methods used in her home country before making a decision.

Sara is frustrated because she believes medical treatment is in her mother's best interest and wants the healthcare team to persuade Mrs. Alavi to proceed with the recommended care. The medical team is concerned about delaying treatment and has asked you to help facilitate communication and ensure that Mrs. Alavi understands her diagnosis, treatment options, and the potential consequences of delaying or declining recommended treatment. Mrs. Alavi appears overwhelmed and has not made a clear decision.

Ethical and Family Considerations

You must consider Mrs. Alavi's right to self-determination while also supporting informed decision-making and responding to the concerns of the healthcare team. Language and cultural barriers may affect her understanding of the diagnosis and treatment options.

Sara is Mrs. Alavi's primary source of support and often serves as an interpreter. However, Sara's strong opinions may unintentionally influence her mother's choices. As

the social worker, you must help ensure that Mrs. Alavi's own voice is heard while maintaining a constructive working relationship with Sara and the healthcare team.

Required Areas to Address

1. Assessment and Prioritization

Assess Mrs. Alavi's understanding of her diagnosis and treatment options, considering language, cultural, family, and other relevant factors. Describe the steps you would take to ensure that her preferences and voice remain central while appropriately addressing the concerns of her daughter and the healthcare team.

2. Ethical Decision-Making

Apply relevant provisions of the NASW Code of Ethics and/or applicable Arkansas social work ethics/standards of practice to this case. Explain how you would address the tension between Mrs. Alavi's right to self-determination and the responsibility to support informed decision-making. Describe how you would help ensure that Mrs. Alavi understands the potential benefits, risks, and consequences of her available options without coercing her decision.

3. Cultural and Communication Considerations

Identify cultural, religious, family, immigration-related, or other contextual factors that could be relevant to Mrs. Alavi's decision-making. Explain how you would explore these factors with Mrs. Alavi without assuming that commonly described beliefs or practices apply to her personally. Describe culturally responsive and culturally humble approaches you would use with Mrs. Alavi and her family.

Also describe the strategies you would use to address the language barrier and support clear, accurate, and client-centered communication.

4. Systemic Issues and Macro Practice

Identify one systemic social, cultural, organizational, or institutional barrier illustrated by this case that may affect healthcare access for immigrants or refugees. Propose one realistic macro-level social work response—such as policy advocacy, community outreach, organizational change, or research—and explain how it could improve healthcare access beyond Mrs. Alavi's individual situation.

Use of Academic Literature

Integrate scholarly literature throughout the paper where it is relevant to your analysis. Appropriate topics may include cultural humility or culturally responsive healthcare, language access and use of professional interpreters, family involvement in medical decision-making, informed consent, patient autonomy, healthcare access for immigrants and refugees, and ethical social work practice.

Your sources should support your reasoning rather than simply be summarized. Be sure to distinguish between general information about cultural or religious practices and what is actually known about Mrs. Alavi as an individual.