

Case study: Integrating a new team member

[Case modified from: P.G. Clark, C. Coot, T.J.K. Drinka, 2007, Theory and practice in interprofessional ethics: A framework for understanding ethical issues in health care teams, *Journal of Interprofessional Care* 21(6): 591-603.]

Judy, who had worked as a senior social worker in a mental health setting for 12 years, was hired as a team social worker in a community health care organization. Shirley, one of the team RNs, perceived Judy as hesitant and ineffective in patient care planning meetings. Other team members also found Judy to be too hesitant in making decisions, often rolling their eyes when Judy asked team members for their opinions. Despite their concerns about Judy's hesitancy, team members also complained when Judy did not consult them before making a patient care decision. As Judy experienced these mixed messages, she became more guarded in her social work assessments.

The interprofessional team on which Judy was placed had a culture of socializing together after work. Initially, team members invited Judy to join them, but she did not have time due to the care that she was providing for her mother after work and also was uncertain about how much to socialize with her colleagues. When the team was together after work, they discussed Judy's behaviour, often noting that her mode of dress was out of style. Carol, the team facilitator, would occasionally join the rest of the team for a drink after work. Shirley complained to Carol that Judy was not doing her job. She also mentioned that the team did not like Judy, because she did not socialize with them and wouldn't disclose information about her personal life as they all had done with each other. The nursing assistant and dietician saw Judy as being very unfriendly. Subsequently, Carol spoke with Fran (the social work supervisor) stating that Judy was a problem and she wasn't sure that Judy would work out with this team.

In her monthly supervisory meeting, Fran asked Judy how things were going with her team. As Judy's eyes began to tear she said that she was thinking of leaving. Judy said that she hadn't realized how hard it would be to work with a team, and commented that the team members kept comparing her to a former team social worker who was not liked by them. Judy told Fran that the team seemed fairly uncomfortable with mental health issues and that she was shocked when the team made derogatory comments about patients, i.e., that some were dirty and smelly or that the team couldn't stand certain patients. And, in terms of the team, Judy wasn't sure what to do because someone had told her that once you were on Shirley's bad side that you were always on her bad side.