

STUDENT HANDOUT
Case Studies: Working with Diverse Clients and Families

DIRECTIONS: In groups, consider the following case studies and respond to the discussion questions below:

Juliana is an HCA who was recently hired by a home support agency. One of the first clients she is assigned to visit is Mr. James Johnson. Jim is a 63-year-old man and former intravenous drug user who is living with HIV and is receiving end-of-life care for Stage 4 liver cancer. He has been prescribed medical marijuana to manage his pain.

Jim's wife, Karen, cares for him 24 hours per day. Juliana is assigned to visit for respite care, four hours, twice per week. On this first visit, Karen does not want to leave the house because she doesn't know Juliana and is concerned Juliana won't know what Jim wants or needs. Karen shows Juliana around the house and is friendly towards her but spends most of the time sitting by Jim's bedside, frequently patting his hand or hugging him.

Juliana's training did not include much information on HIV, drug use, or medical marijuana. Her personal values and beliefs make her uncomfortable with the situation. She is polite but makes sure to wear gloves whenever she touches Jim, any of his belongings, or even when she shakes hands with Karen. When it is time to leave, she tells Karen that maybe another HCA will come for the next visit.

Manpreet works as a home support worker and is assigned to work with Mr. Brent Mead. Brent is a 43-year-old man who is paralyzed from the waist down as the result of a motor vehicle accident. Brent works as a freelance writer and lives with his husband, Jordan. Manpreet is assigned to assist with personal care for two hours, five mornings per week.

On the first visit, Brent and Jordan show Manpreet the morning routine. This is Manpreet's first time working with a gay couple and she hasn't received much education about sexual diversity. Brent and Jordan are friendly towards Manpreet, but she feels uncomfortable and is unsure of how to respond when Brent and Jordan are affectionate towards one another. Manpreet avoids eye contact with Brent and Jordan and is quiet and reserved during the visit. She considers contacting her employer to ask if she can be excused from this assignment.

For each scenario, discuss:

- Did the HCA exhibit professional behaviour? Why or why not?

- Consider and discuss major concepts of this course that could help the HCA to act professionally. For example:
 - Providing person-centred care
 - Supporting personal preferences and choices of the client
 - Respecting individuality
 - Working with families
 - Valuing diversity
 - Respecting choice of alternative medicines and treatments
 - Protecting personal safety

- As an HCA, how should you respond when you encounter a situation that is not in alignment with your personal values or beliefs?

- As an HCA, how should you respond to a situation you are not familiar with? Where can you seek support to increase your understanding?

- As an HCA, do you have the right to refuse an assignment? On what basis (if any) might this be possible?