



The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Social Work Practice

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“AI has developed to the point that it can replace human social workers.”

- ▶ I agree
- ▶ I disagree
- ▶ I am unsure
- ▶ I'm kind of scared

Agenda

Introduction to AI

Ethically Responsible Uses of AI

Ethically Questionable Uses

Situations with Ethical Challenges

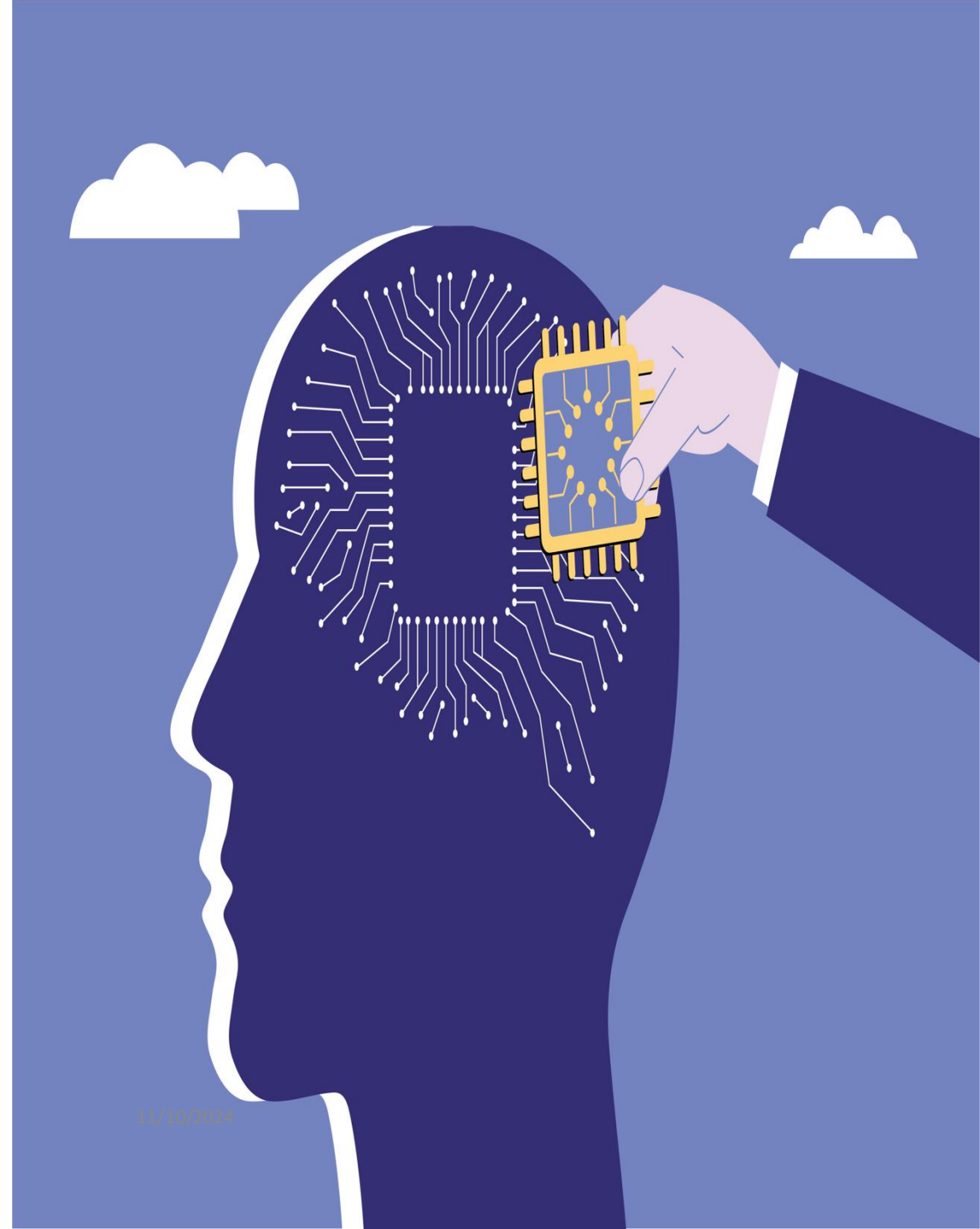
Questions & Comments

Key Takeaways

Intro:⁴ What is AI?

Digital systems, programs, or machines that can perform tasks previously achievable only through human reasoning, perception, or problem-solving (IT Chronicles, 2023)

Mimics human
intelligence and learning



“Large Language Models”

- ▶ Natural language processing using AI
- ▶ Uses deep learning algorithms
- ▶ Trained on large amounts of data (“garbage in, garbage out” vs. “high quality in, high quality out”)
- ▶ Trained to recognize, translate, predict, or generate “human sounding” text and other content (video, images)
- ▶ Speech recognition (and translate voice to text)
- ▶ Visual perception (e.g., interpret body language)
- ▶ Language translation
- ▶ May hallucinate - provide false information

Examples of AI Programs

6

- ▶ ChatGPT
- ▶ ChatSpot
- ▶ Copilot
- ▶ Character.AI
- ▶ Replika
- ▶ iThenticate
- ▶ ExplainPaper
- ▶ Quivr
- ▶ Siri/Alexa
- MidJourney (art)
- D.ID (video maker)
- MS ClipChamp (video)
- Stable Diffusion
- Khanmigo
- JotBot
- GPTZero
- Claude
- CrystallKnows
- Canva
- Grammarly
- Scholarcy



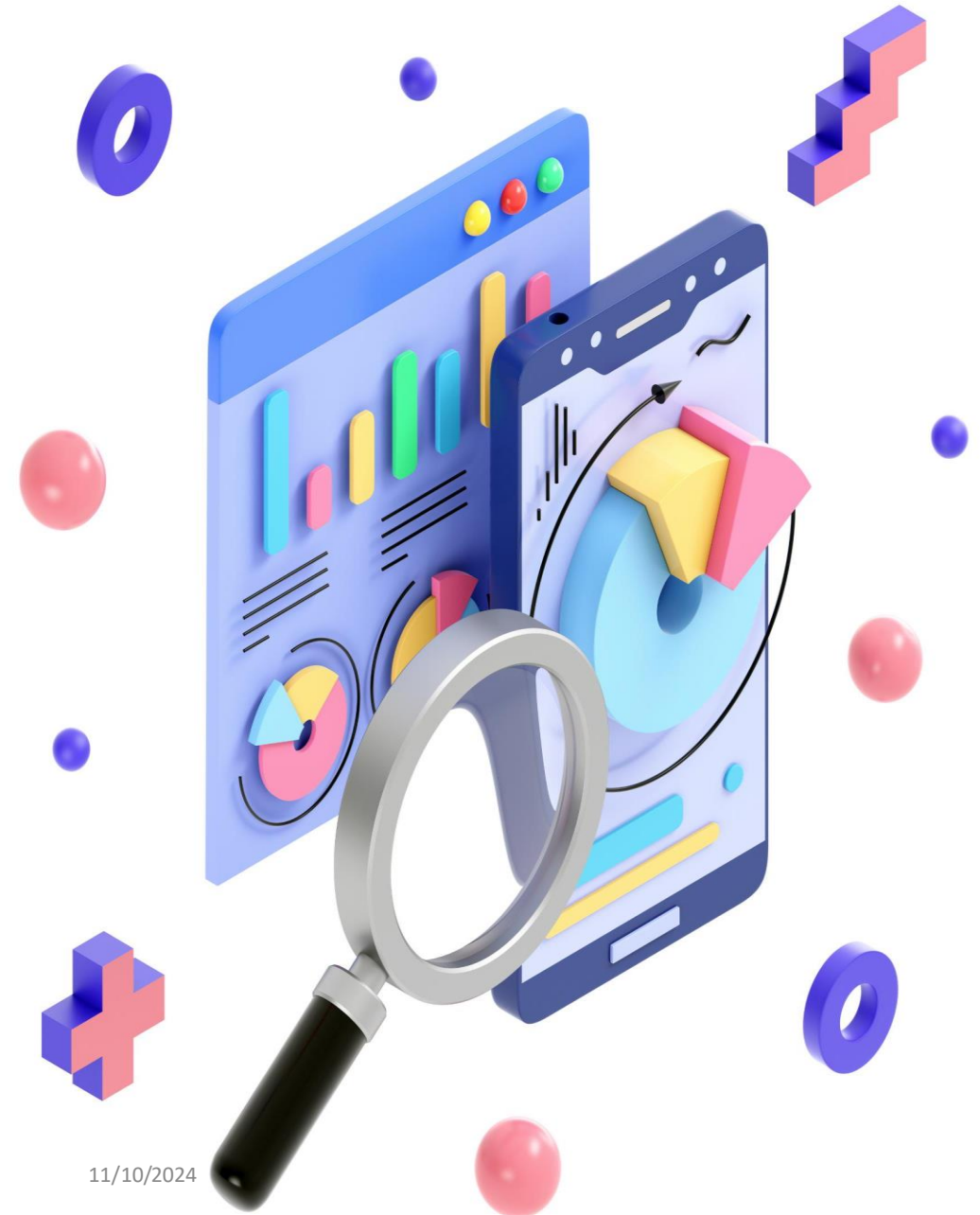
Possible Uses of AI in SW

- ▶ Gathering Information
- ▶ Facilitating Communication
- ▶ Screening and Assessment
- ▶ Risk Prediction
- ▶ Interventions - CBT, Problem-Solving, Relaxation Techniques, Narrative Therapy...
- ▶ Research - Data Analysis, Summarizing Articles
- ▶ Progress Notes, Summaries
- ▶ Client education (information)
- ▶ SW education and training
- ▶ 24/7 support (chatbots, social robots)

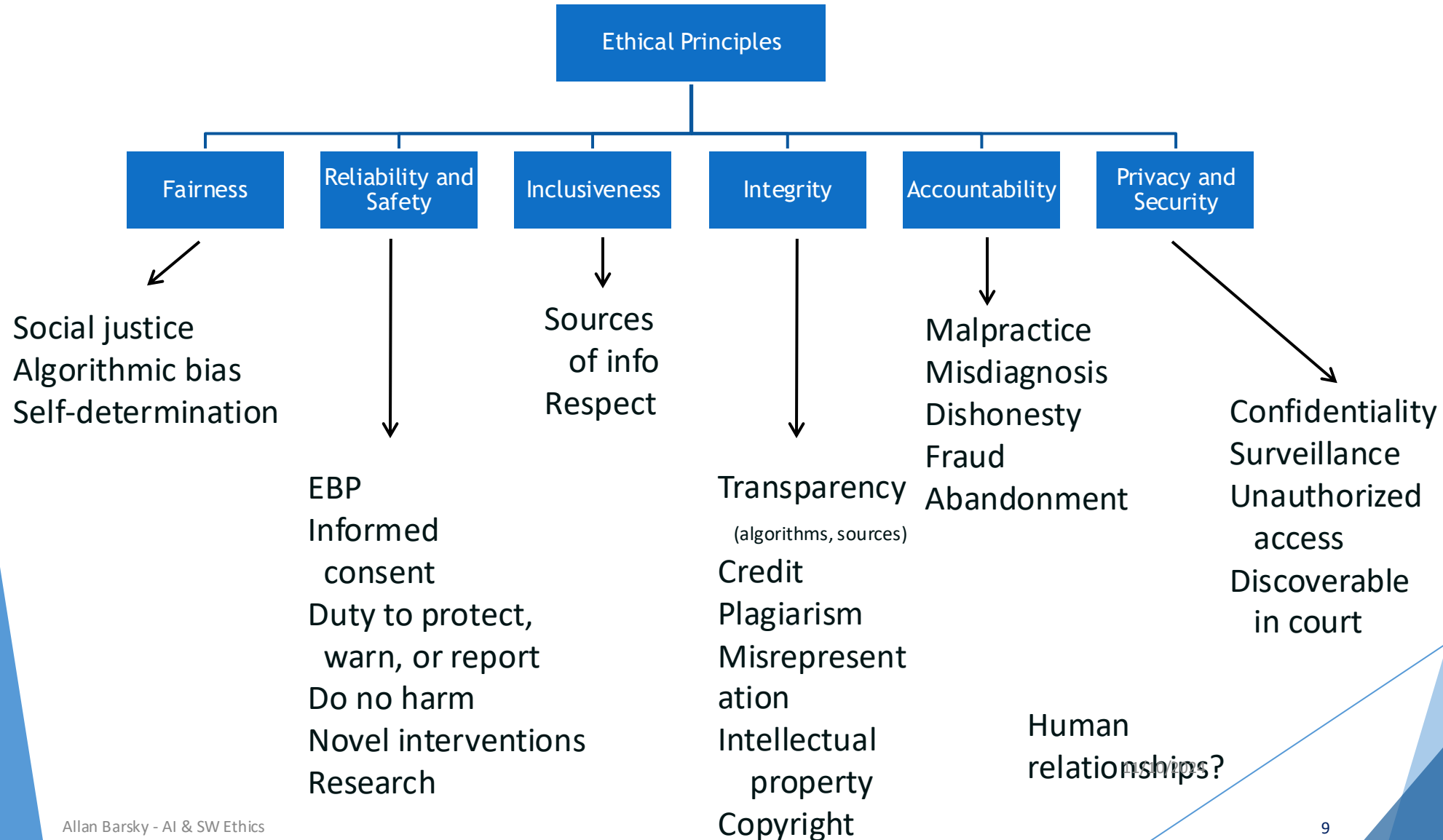
Possibility:
“Anything social
workers can
do...”

Possible “Pros” of AI for SW

- ▶ Efficiency
- ▶ Does repetitive tasks; frees time for higher-level tasks
- ▶ Available 24/7
- ▶ Accessibility functions - different languages, people with visual or auditory challenges, people with disabilities, people at distance
- ▶ Analyzing large data
- ▶ More effective for some purposes?



Responsible AI Use



AI as a Tool, Not a Replacement



SW maintains
accountability

Like an
“eager
consultant or
practicum
student”

Key Social Work Ethics

Fidelity - Primary commitment to client

Autonomy - Self-determination

Informed consent

Competence

Dual relationships

Appropriate boundaries

Privacy and confidentiality

Abandonment

Integrity

AI and Social Justice

Social Justice

- ▶ Ensure fair treatment and opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their background

Respect for All People

- ▶ Inclusive and equitable society

Potential Biases in AI Algorithms

- ▶ Inherent biases that may perpetuate social inequalities if not addressed and mitigated.
- ▶ Reinforcing and perpetuating existing prejudices and discrimination
- ▶ Marginalizing or excluding particular groups

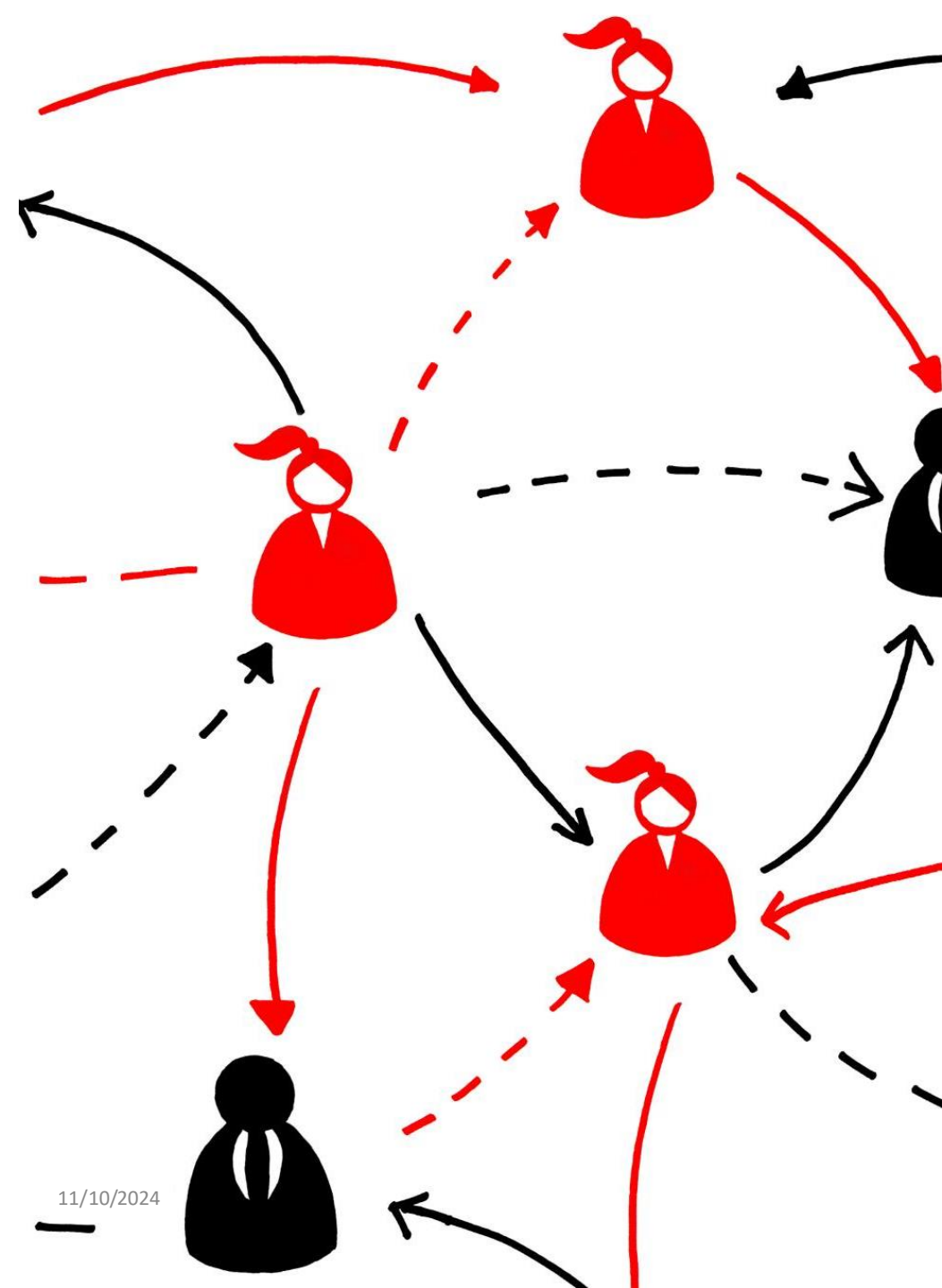
Situation 1: AI for Intake



- ▶ SW asks clients to complete an intake and assessment process facilitated by AI
- ▶ Advantages?
- ▶ Informed consent - What information? What choices?
- ▶ Confidentiality - How is data stored, shared, and protected? - SW's computer vs. AI provider

Situation 2: AI for Best Practice Research

- ▶ SW uses AI to identify best practices for treating clients with generalized anxiety disorders
- ▶ To what extent can SW “trust” AI’s findings?
- ▶ What is the source of data that AI relies upon?
- ▶ How can SW verify the research and findings?
- ▶ What are the risks re racial or gender biases?
- ▶ Who is accountable if SW relies on inappropriate findings?



Situation 3: Parent-Youth Communication

- ▶ Transgender teen has been living on street after feeling rejected by parents
- ▶ SW helping reunite the teen with parents
- ▶ SW provides clients with an AI program to facilitate text-based communication
- ▶ Program reviews each message before person sends it and offers suggestions on how to remove “toxicity” and promote “constructive” dialogue
- ▶ Any ethical issues?

Situation 4: Social Robots for Older Adults

- ▶ How might referring a client to AI be perceived as abandonment?
- ▶ How can SWs use AI plus, plus... to ensure continuity of services?



Situation 5: Lack of Integrity

- ▶ SW uses AI for psychological testing
- ▶ SW does not disclose use of AI to client
- ▶ Does client have a right to know?



Situation 6: Do No Harm

- ▶ W uses AI to facilitate evidence-based and individualized referrals
- ▶ What if AI makes an inappropriate referral?
- ▶ How can SW's minimize risk of harm?
- ▶ How would a reasonable SW, acting prudently, make use of this type of AI (if at all)?
- ▶ Ensure AI is evidence-based
- ▶ Pilot test
- ▶ Educate client on appropriate use
- ▶ Maintain oversight - monitor, evaluate, intervene

Access: SW duties...

- ▶ What if a client does not have access to a computer, cellphone or other device?
- ▶ What if a client does not trust AI?
- ▶ What if a client lacks ability to use AI effectively and safely?

Questions for Discussion



AI is here

AI keeps changing

Responsible use includes
fairness, reliability &
safety, inclusiveness,
integrity, accountability,
privacy & security

AI is a tool, not a
replacement

Try it, practice it

Handle with care 😊

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