

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

INTERACTING WITH INMATES IN A FAIR MANNER

Mary Beth Moore, a student taking an online Introduction to Corrections course, works as a cook in the local work release center as a way to make ends meet. She got the job after her uncle, a local car salesman, sold the sheriff a new automobile.

Moore is apprehensive about working in the jail, but the inmates and coworkers quickly put her at ease. She is the youngest worker in the kitchen, though she is the only one seeking a college degree.

Moore and her coworkers have a very clear job: prepare the food, distribute the meals, collect the food, and count the forks when they are returned to make sure that they get them all back. The inmates working in the kitchen clean up after each meal. It is Moore's job to make sure that the inmates complete their tasks.

One day Moore is talking to Nancy Walker, a likeable middle-aged drug addict who has been in and out of prison a dozen times. Walker is affectionately called "Bob" because she "bobbed" in and out of prison so regularly. Walker asks Moore about her college experience: "How many classes are you taking?"

Moore responds, "I have three this semester. I am taking them online so I can keep working and pay for my classes." "What is your favorite class?" Walker asks.

"I really like my corrections class because it helps me understand my job," Moore responds.

"Do you keep your books or sell them back to the library?" Walker asks.

"Well, the library doesn't buy books, that would be the online bookstore," Moore responds. "Anyway, I never sell my books back because I want to keep them."

Walker then gets to the point, "My daughter is a criminal justice major and trying to raise her daughter who has epilepsy. The money she spends on her books could be used to buy her daughter the medicine she needs. Can my daughter borrow your books? I promise that she will give them back."

Moore is caught off guard. She has been trained not to befriend inmates or do them favors. "Let me think about it," she says just to end the conversation.

Nancy follows up with, "Think about it. Your generosity will make you have a safer work environment."

YOU DECIDE

1. Under what conditions, if any, should Moore lend the books to Walker's daughter?
2. If the books were e-books that required passwords, how might this make a difference in your response?