

# ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

## THE PROCESS OF LABELING BEHAVIOR AS CRIME

As a college student, you have been hired as a part-time security specialist for the campus police department. The experience will help you as you think about possible careers in criminal justice. Part of your responsibilities include walking in the dorms to ensure that residents are not breaking laws or dorm policies. One Saturday evening, you are walking through the newest dorm on campus when you smell smoke coming from one of the rooms. You knock on the door and everything gets quiet in the room. About a half-minute later a student opens the door. You recognize the student immediately as Pat, who you sit by in your favorite criminal justice class, but

you don't know Pat's age for certain. You've always felt a special connection to Pat, although the two of you have never talked. As you look in the room, you see what appears to be an empty 40-ounce can that once contained beer and you smell alcohol on Pat's breath.

## YOU DECIDE

1. Has a crime been committed? Explain.
2. Should you report the case to the campus police? Why or why not?
3. What are the ramifications of calling the behavior a crime in this situation?