

# Week 8: Collaboration Café (graded): Ethical Position Versus Standards Violation

No unread replies.No replies.

Two nurses, Vicki, RN, and Cindy, RN, say they were just trying to protect patients when they anonymously reported their concerns last November to the Department of Health and to the Joint commission. The RNs believed that the 140-bed hospital that they work for was not living up to ethical practice standards. The report given by the RN's indicated Ms. Anderson, one of three quality review coordinators working for the quality department in the hospital, improperly encouraged clinical managers to change patient safety data at the Sunny Valley Medical Center.

By encouraging the data changes to misrepresent what was truly happening, Ms. Anderson's actions affected an important decision regarding a patient safety issue. Moreover, the county attorney's office indicted Ms. Anderson on "misuse of official information," a third-degree felony that carries potential penalties of 2-10 years' in prison and a maximum fine of \$10,000.

Vicki and Cindy, both long-time nurses at the facility, were fired from their positions and were subsequently arrested last December, just five days past the 60-day window that could have been part of the defense to prove retaliation. The two nurses are free on bond of \$5,000 each.

The Department of Health attorney sent a letter to the hospital attorneys stating that it is improper to criminally prosecute people for raising complaints with the board; that the complaints were confidential and not subject to subpoena; that the Department of Health is exempt from federal HIPAA law; and that, on the contrary, the board depends on reporting from healthcare professionals to carry out its duty of protecting the public from improper practitioners.

Please discuss ethical considerations in Vicki's and Cindy's behavior. Justify your answer.

Describe the various ethical, legal, and interpersonal conflicts that exist in this case.