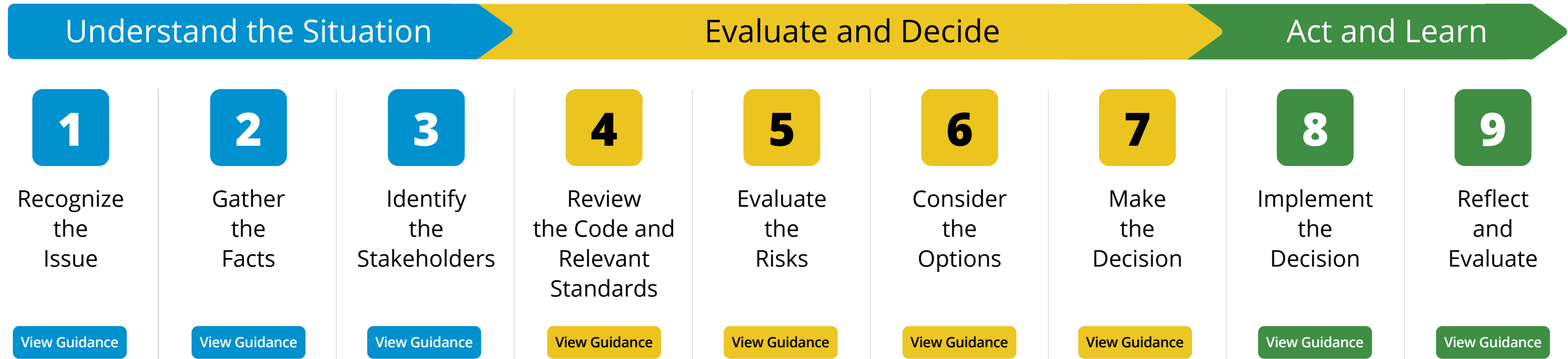


Ethical Decision-Making Guide

A Practical Guide for Applying the Code in Practice

This guide is designed to help cybersecurity professionals apply the **Code of Professional Conduct** in everyday situations. Steps and guidance are intended to support, not prescribe, decision-making. Professionals should exercise judgment based on the specific circumstances. Use this guide when navigating ethical questions, making decisions, or reflecting on your professional responsibilities.



Final Integrity Check

Aligns with the Code?	Transparent & Explainable?	Protects Trust?	Professionally Responsible?

Still Unsure?

When in doubt, stop and:

- ✓ Seek Guidance
- ✓ Consult Resources
- ✓ Consider the Broader Impact



1

Recognize the Issue

Pause and determine whether the situation involves an ethical or professional responsibility.

Considerations



What is the potential issue?

Could this decision affect trust or professional integrity?

Are there conflicting interests?

Red Flags



Something feels uncomfortable or unclear.

Security criticized for causing delays or slowing business operations

Tips



If something seems questionable, it's important to pause, reflect and listen to your internal compass.

As you move through each step, keep the following questions, risk signals, and practical tips in mind. Remember that this isn't a complete list but a useful guide to assist your decision-making.

2

Gather the Facts

Seek the information needed to understand the situation clearly.

Considerations



What do you know is true?

What information is missing or unclear?

Are there legal, contractual, or technical facts that change the situation?

Red Flags



Incomplete or contradictory information.

Secrecy, urgency, unease, personal gain, pressure to look the other way, rule bending, or harm.

Tips



Avoid speculation.

Gather enough facts and evidence to prevent guessing or assumptions.

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3

Identify the Stakeholders

Consider who may be affected directly or indirectly.

Considerations



Who could be affected inside or outside the organization?

How might this impact customers, users, coworkers, or the public?

Red Flags



Ignoring non-technical impacts.

Downplaying impact because “no one will know.”

Tips



Think broadly.

Impact may not always be immediately clear but is key to assessing risk.

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4

Review the Code and Relevant Standards

Consult the Code and other applicable professional expectations.

Considerations



What Code principles apply here?

Are there laws, regulations, internal policies, procedures or standards to consider?

Does this align with your professional values – not just what’s allowed?

Do any conflicting duties or obligations emerge?

Red Flags



“It’s not illegal” used as justification.

Rationalizing actions based on results rather than principles.

“We’ve always done it this way.”

Tips



When in doubt, interpret the Code in a way that protects people, systems and trust.

Consider your environment and use the Code as a moral compass especially in organizations that have a “but we have always done it this way” attitude.

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5

Evaluate the Risks

Assess potential harms, consequences and broader implications.

Considerations



What are the short-term, long-term risks?

Could this harm people, systems, data or reputation?

Could this issue become front-page news and pose reputational risks for your organization?

Red Flags



Dismissing risk because "it hasn't happened yet."

Focusing only on business or legal exposure.

Tips



Seek out assistance, relevant guidance and support to assist in your evaluation.

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6

Consider the Options

Identify possible actions and weigh their implications.

Considerations



What are the realistic courses of action?

What are the consequences (intended and unintended)?

Are there alternative solutions?

Are there reporting obligations?

Red Flags



Limiting to one option because of pressure, fear, or convenience.

Asked to ignore or downplay risks (e.g., security, reputational, legal, or operational impacts).

Tips



Good ethical decision making explores more than one path.

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7

Make the Decision

Choose the course of action that best aligns with professional responsibilities.

Considerations



Does the decision align with the Code, your professional responsibilities, and the outcomes of your evaluation?

Can you clearly explain why it is the most responsible choice given ethical, business, and stakeholder considerations?

Did you document your decision, including rationale and prepare to communicate transparently?

Red Flags



Pressure to decide quickly without review.

Avoiding documentation or reporting.

Tips



Weigh ethical obligations alongside business objectives and select the option that best upholds professional integrity.

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8

Implement the Decision

Carry out the decision with professionalism and accountability.

Considerations



Who needs to be informed or involved in implementation?

Red Flags



Taking action alone when collaboration is expected.

Tips



Take appropriate next steps (planning, communication, adding to the risk register, reporting, etc.)

As you move through each step, keep the following questions, risk signals, and practical tips in mind. Remember that this isn't a complete list but a useful guide to assist your decision-making.

9

Reflect and Evaluate

Consider the outcome and apply lessons to future decisions.

Considerations



What was the outcome?

Would you make the same choice again?

Is there anything to report, improve, or share with others?

Red Flags



Lack of reflection after high-stakes issues.

Repeating similar ethical missteps across situations.

Tips



Reflection and identifying lessons learned helps promote continuous improvement, reduces risk, and increases transparency.

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