

## Ethics at Providence Health Care



**This booklet will act as a guideline to help you bring the best of our wisdom and lived experience to your work by placing ethical reflection and discussion at the centre of all our activity.**

# Ethics at Providence Health Care

Since the founding of St. Paul's Hospital in 1894, the first Providence health facility, ethical reflection has been a cornerstone of who we are and what we do. Grounded in the traditions of our founders, the various religious congregations of sisters, and the evolving ethical reflection of the Catholic Church, Providence Health Care strives to be an ethical organization. We hope to accomplish this goal by providing compassionate care, engaging in meaningful research and teaching activities as well as paying attention to how we treat one another and the people we serve.

At Providence, we believe that ethics touches everyone and everything. Accordingly, we seek to bring the best of our wisdom and lived experience to our work by placing ethical reflection and discussion at the centre of all our activity. Whether the question is how best to respond to a medical emergency, allocate scarce resources in a just manner, support innovative research and teaching, or support the individuals, teams, programs and the organization as a whole in living with integrity, values underpin all that we do.



Ethics at Providence is the discipline that examines who we ought to be and how we make decisions in light of who we say we are. We are committed to helping individuals and groups within the organization to think carefully about the values that we do live by, the values we should live by and to makes decisions and take action that are rooted in these values.

Making ethically sound decisions is not always easy. A key challenge involves bringing to bear the skills and knowledge of the discipline of ethics to our clinical, research, teaching, administrative and organizational decision-making in a systematic and organized way.

At Providence we commit ourselves to:

- Identifying ethical issues
- Demonstrating how to deal with ethical conflict
- Establishing procedures and policies that reflect our ethical commitments
- Including ethical issues as an agenda item
- Establishing an organizational climate that allows ethical concerns to be raised and fairly considered.

*The following guide provides an overview of ethics at Providence Health Care. Our hope is that by using this reference you will be able to make better ethical choices wherever you work.*

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### Mission

Providence Health Care is a Catholic health care community that respects the sacredness of all aspects of life. Inspired by the healing ministry of Jesus Christ, our staff, physicians and volunteers are dedicated to service and to the support of one another. In this environment of service, support and respect, we meet the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of those served through compassionate care, teaching and research.

### Vision

We will continue to grow as a community, regional and academic health science enterprise that is a recognized leader, and major player, in the provision of health care within British Columbia. We will be respected for our care and services, known for our Mission and Values, acknowledged for the contributions of our teachers and researchers. We will actualize our Vision by being an organization of caring hearts, creative souls, and resourceful actions.

### Values

<i>Spirituality</i>	We nurture the God-given creativity, love and compassion that dwell within us all.
<i>Integrity</i>	We build our relationships on honesty, justice and fairness.
<i>Stewardship</i>	We share accountability for the well-being of our community.
<i>Trust</i>	We behave in ways that generate trust and build confidence.
<i>Excellence</i>	We achieve excellence through learning and continuous improvement.
<i>Respect</i>	We respect the diversity, dignity and interdependence of all persons.

# How We Make Decisions at Providence Health Care

## Key Definitions

**Ethics** - is the discipline that examines who we ought to be and how we make decisions in light of who we say we are.

**Clinical Ethics** - focuses on the encounter between patients/residents and health care providers.

**Organizational Ethics** - is the intentional use of our shared values to guide the decisions of a department/unit or the entire organization.

## Research Ethics

- Examines the fundamental rationale for a study
- Considers whether the question under investigation is important
- Explores whether the study design can answer the question
- Looks to protect the rights and interests of the human research subjects

## Ethical questions, uncertainties, and tensions can arise when:

- It is unclear what values should guide our actions
- There are two or more values that we would like to have guide our actions, but that lead in opposite directions
- Individuals involved in the interaction have different and opposing perspectives on the values and beliefs that should guide care and/or decision-making
- There is poor communication amongst those involved about the values and beliefs that should guide decisions
- Some individuals (often family) are having difficulty coping with events such that they are not yet ready or able to participate in discussions about the values that should guide care



- There is no shared understanding of the medical indications (diagnosis/prognosis) for the patient/resident
- Some individuals involved in the interactions do not feel their perspectives on the values and beliefs that should guide care or decision-making are being heard

# The Providence Framework for Ethical Decision-making

In our personal, professional and organizational life, we often struggle with issues for which no “right” answer seems evident. In these situations, it is important to think through as carefully as possible the many factors that are at stake. The purpose of reflecting on a case or situation explicitly from an ethics perspective is to move towards a resolution that is both respectful of the perspectives of all those involved in a case and grounded in a well-considered set of values.

## 1. Define the Issue (s)

- Defining the issue or problem begins the very important process of reaching consensus regarding what the issue actually is

## 2. Clarify the facts as much as possible

- Establish the facts of the issue (e.g. who, what, where, when, why, how)
- Establish what we do not know
- Describe the relevant factors (e.g. social, economic, political, legal)

## 3. Identify stakeholders and the various perspectives

## 4. Analyze the values

- What values are being affirmed?
- What values are being negated?

## 5. Identify alternative courses of action in light of our values, mission and vision

- What are the options?
- What are the pros and cons of each option, including doing nothing?

## 6. Make a decision

- What option best advances the Vision, Mission, Values and agreed upon directions of Providence Health Care?
- Are there any contingency plans in case the decision does not have the intended outcomes or deals with possible conflicts?

## 7. Implement the decision

- Who will implement the decision?
- How and when will the decision be communicated to all stakeholders?

## 8. Evaluate the decision. Was it the right one?



## Health Ethics Guide:

### A Foundational Document for Providence Health Care

As a Catholic health care organization Providence Health Care does its ethical reflection within the context of our mission, vision, values and the Health Ethics Guide (2000) approved by the Catholic Bishops of Canada.

The purpose of the guide is to “facilitate sound ethical reflection that leads to informed decision-making. It presents a moral vision reflecting Roman Catholic teaching on health ethics as it applies to contemporary Canadian society.” (Viii) The Health Ethics Guide further states: Christian ethical reasoning is based upon a worldview contained in the gospel as interpreted by the church. This world view gives rise to values and principles that direct ethical decision making and that enable us to respond to the call to respect dignity, promote justice and foster trust. (p. 11)

*Besides a preamble and an introduction, the book is broken into the following chapters:*

- The Communal Nature of Care
- Dignity of the Human Person
- Human Reproduction
- Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation
- Care of the Dying Person
- Research on Human Subjects
- Governance and Administration

*The appendices include:*

- A Framework for Ethical Discernment
- Principle of Legitimate Cooperation
- Glossary of Terms
- Selected Bibliography

*Core Values as outlined by the Health Ethics Guide for informed decision-making:*

- Dignity of the Human Person
- Interconnectedness of all people
- *Stewardship* - we share a responsibility to respect, protect and care for all creation and for ourselves
- *Respect for human life* - human life is sacred and inviolable in all of its phases and in every situation
- *Common Good* - the building of a just and compassionate society in which true human growth for all persons is encouraged
- *Charity & Solidarity* - Charity urges us to respond to the needs of others. Solidarity affirms our interconnectedness to all human beings by having compassion for the voiceless, the poor and the marginalized.
- *Creativity* - We are to use our own free and intelligent creativity to fashion a better world while respecting its true nature, appreciating its benefits and accepting its limitations.

Copies of the Health Ethics Guide are available throughout Providence within the various clinical units as well as departments.

## Ethics Services

The broad goals of PHC Ethics Services are to strengthen the role of ethical reflection within the organization and to increase the capacity of the PHC community to access ethical resources, make informed decisions and understand the unique voice the organization brings to ethical reflection.

The services offered include:

- ongoing clinical ethics consultation
- ethics-based policy analysis
- ethics education/research
- support for the Research Ethics Board
- ethics communication and outreach
- support for ethics in the wider community.

Of these, clinical consultation, policy analysis and ethics education/research are the highest priority.

## Requesting an Ethics Consult

While we continue to try to build explicitly ethics-based decision-making capacity, PHC's Ethics Services also offers a clinical ethics consultation service across all PHC sites. This involves providing support for staff, patients or families in times of ethical uncertainty and/or conflict. The service is an additional help to support those involved in the situation to ensure that the most appropriate care is being delivered to the patient/resident in question in a manner that is respectful to all the parties involved and that supports the various relationships between these parties. The process includes making the ethical dimensions of the issues explicit, clarifying values, helping parties to achieve the most ethically sound approaches possible given the limitations of the situation as well as mediating the conflict in situations where there is disagreement about values.

The service is also offered to assist staff, patients/residents or families reflect on and understand the ethical dimensions of decisions already made. As well a consult can be requested to facilitate an organizational issue within a unit, department or site.

To access PHC Ethics Services or request an ethics consult, please contact us at 604-806-8851.

## Conclusion:

Choices dominate our life. Wherever we find ourselves within the Providence community, we each have decisions to make, some of which are not easy. By reflecting upon the legacy of our founders, our shared Mission, Vision, Values and ethical traditions, together we can make good ethical decisions. Yet, we are not alone as individuals, groups or an organization in our on-going quest for ethical integrity. We continue in the footsteps of a long tradition of people seeking to do the right thing when confronted by tough choices.



## A Brief Glossary of Terms from the HEALTH ETHICS GUIDE, which informs our decision-making at PHC:

### **Abortion:**

A direct abortion is a procedure whose deliberate purpose is to terminate the life of an embryo or a fetus. An indirect abortion is a procedure necessary to save the life of the mother in which the death of the fetus is an inevitable result, e.g. the treatment of an ectopic pregnancy

### **Allocation:**

The designation or the setting aside of resources for specific purposes

### **Common Good:**

The sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily (taken from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1906)

### **Competence:**

Possessing sufficient capacity to make a reasonable decision for one's own best interest

### **Conscience:**

The specifically human capacity to make practical judgments in matters involving ethical issues

### **Consent (informed):**

Informed consent requires that an individual possess the competence and freedom, as well as understand and appreciate the information needed to make a reasonable decision for their own best interest

### **Distributive Justice:**

The obligation of society to distribute the goods of that society equitably to its individual members

### **Double Effect**

When an action has both beneficial and harmful effects, the action may be best pursued under certain conditions-in essence-the intention is to achieve the most benefit and the least harm, the benefit must outweigh the harm, and the beneficial effects are unavoidably linked to the harmful ones (see p. 13 of the Health Ethics Guide for more detail)

### **Duress:**

In the context of the principle of legitimate cooperation, duress refers to those pressures that cause the co-operator to lose the freedom to refuse to co-operate lest a greater evil occur

### **Free & Informed Decision Making**

Primary decision maker ... person receiving care, advanced health care directives

### **Legitimate Co-Operation**

(To understand this unique Catholic Principle, please read pages 88-92 in the Health Ethics Guide)

### **Moral Certainty:**

The confidence that all of the conditions required for making an informed decision have been met beyond a reasonable doubt.

### **Principle:**

A more specific articulation of a value that is used as a starting point or rule of thumb for good ethical reflection and action.

### **Religion:**

The expression of spirituality through traditions, rites and practices usually within the context of an organized faith.

### **Spirituality:**

The search for the Sacred. A conscious striving to move beyond isolation and self-absorption to a deeper awareness of interconnectedness with the self, other human beings and the transcendent.

### **Subsidiarity:**

Decisions are taken closest to grass roots as possible. The responsibility for fulfilling the health needs that a person cannot meet alone must be assumed by larger or more complex groups, e.g. community organizations and different levels of government.

### **Totality & Integrity:**

All our physiological and psychological functions are to be developed, used, cared for to protect our human dignity. Human function can only be sacrificed for the saving or better functioning of the whole person.

Our distinctive vocation in Christian health care is not so much to heal better or more efficiently than anyone else; it is to bring comfort to people by giving them an experience that will strengthen their confidence in life. The ultimate goal of our care is to give to those who are ill, through our care, a reason to hope.

(Joseph Cardinal Bernadin, quoted in Health Ethics Guide, p. 8)

