

## Ethics Services

In our personal and professional lives, we can struggle with issues for which no single “right” answer seems evident. Ethics is the philosophical discipline that examines ideas about right and wrong, how we should behave, and how we make decisions in light of who we say we are. At Providence Health Care, we believe that ethical reflection and discussion should be at the centre of everything we do. Ethical issues may arise at the bedside, or at the system level, or both. Approaching these challenges with a sound ethics framework can help bring stakeholders toward a person-centred resolution that is both respectful of the perspectives of all those involved, and grounded in a well-considered set of values.

Please call us if you have questions or concerns about ethical issues such as:

- Supporting patients/residents who choose to live in risk
- Disagreement among patients/residents, families, and care team members
- Fairness and resource allocation
- Issues or questions about our Catholic identity and our Mission, Vision, and Values

## We Can Help

You can reach us **Monday to Friday 8 am to 4 pm**

**Phone:** 604.806.9853

**Email:** [ethics@providencehealth.bc.ca](mailto:ethics@providencehealth.bc.ca)

**Website:** [ethics.providencehealthcare.org](http://ethics.providencehealthcare.org)

# A FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING



# A Framework for Ethical Decision Making

## STEP 1 Identify the Issues

- Identify the key ethical issue(s)
- Consider whether the issue is individual, organizational or both

## STEP 2 Identify the Stakeholders

- Identify stakeholders—be as inclusive as possible
- Include stakeholders who have authority to implement decisions and who are accountable for decisions
- Consider potential conflicts of interest

## STEP 3 Acknowledge Biases, Feelings, and World-Views

- Identify “gut” reactions (positive or negative) and acknowledge “world views” and biases

## STEP 4 Gather and Clarify the Facts

- Establish what we know and don't know about the issue
- Jonsen's “Four Boxes” is helpful in gathering and organizing information for clinical issues:

<b>Medical Indications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>History, diagnosis, prognosis</li><li>Available treatments and expected outcomes</li><li>Balance of benefits and burdens for each treatment or care option</li></ul>	<b>Patient/Resident Preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What are the patient/resident's values, goals and preferences?</li><li>Does the patient/resident have capacity to understand and make decisions?</li><li>Is a substitute decision maker needed?</li></ul>
<b>Quality of Life</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What does “quality of life” mean to the patient/resident?</li><li>What was the patient/resident's quality of life before illness?</li><li>What are the prospects for quality of life with various options?</li></ul>	<b>Contextual Factors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Are there religious, cultural, and family issues to consider?</li><li>Are there legal, risk financial, and resource considerations?</li><li>Is this a case that involves research or teaching?</li></ul>

## STEP 5 Analyze in Light of Ethical Principles

- Consider PHC's Mission, Vision, and Values and the Health Ethics Guide in all ethical decision making
- Identify which principles are in play and which carry more weight in this situation

### CLINICAL ETHICS PRINCIPLES

1. Respect for Autonomy (respect individuals' dignity and freedom)
2. Non-Maleficence (do no harm)
3. Beneficence (promote wellbeing)
4. Justice (Be Fair)

### ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS PRINCIPLES

- Respect human dignity
- Foster trust
- Promote social justice
- Be compassionate
- Support spiritual needs and faith traditions
- Pursue fairness/distributive justice
- Prioritize accountability and transparency
- Ensure excellence
- Build a just workplace
- Commitment to research/innovation

## STEP 6 Identify Options and Weigh with Values and Principles

- Identify the options available, and the pros and cons of each option, including the option of doing nothing
- Determine which option(s) best advances the goals and values of the patient/resident
- Consider the interest of the stakeholders and PHC's Mission, Vision, Values as well as clinical and organizational ethical principles

## STEP 7 Make a Decision

- State clearly what the decision is, and why it is the best option in light of the above
- Identify contingency plans in case of unintended outcomes or unforeseen problems

## STEP 8 Implement and Evaluate the Decision

- Develop a plan for communication and implementation
- Review decisions, outcomes, and key learnings