

Subject: Integrated Ethics Framework	
Section: Administration (Subsection: Leadership)	
Issued By: VP Practice, Academics and Chief Nurse Executive	Approval Date: October 14, 2020
Approved By: Board of Directors	Effective Date: October 23, 2020

1. **Purpose:**

A corporate ethics framework helps support ethical behavior and practices throughout the organization, and helps identify and address ethical issues and dilemmas as they arise.

The key resources contained in this Integrated Ethics Framework include:

- **Ethics Consultation procedure**
- [Appendix A](#): Our *Mission, Vision, and Core Values* at Ontario Shores.
- [Appendix B-1](#): The *IDEA Ethics Framework Tool* intended to support clinical ethical decision-making.
- [Appendix B-2](#): The *Accountability for Reasonableness (A4R) Ethics Framework Tool* intended to support organizational ethical decision-making and priority setting.

Taken together, these resources provide the foundation and guidance for ethical decision-making at Ontario Shores, and also integrate the organization's core Values: *Excellence, Innovation, Safety, Respect, and Community*.

This Integrated Ethics Framework does not apply to research ethics issues. For formal review of research, see the Ontario Shores policies [Research Ethics](#), and [Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

2. **Policy:**

At Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences, this Integrated Ethics Framework will guide all staff, physicians, students, volunteers, and members of the Board of Directors in their decision making. It also provides a standardized approach to develop core competencies for working through ethical issues and making decisions.

3. **Definitions:**

Ethical issue: Fundamentally, ethics is concerned with what makes actions right or wrong, or permissible or impermissible. In health care, the difference between "right" and "wrong" is often less clear, and the decisions we are faced with are rather about deciding which choice is best when faced with less-than-ideal options. Ethical issues arise when values are in conflict with respect to a particular decision or situation and there is uncertainty or disagreement about which values should be given priority and guide action. These "value

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Depending on the situation, an ethics consultation may have one or more of the following objectives:

- To clarify the ethical issue(s) or question(s) and educate stakeholders about the ethical dimensions of the case;
- To facilitate communication between people involved in the case/situation and, where necessary, to help resolve conflict or disagreement;
- To assist in identifying alternative courses of action and, if appropriate, to provide recommendations for or against certain options;
- To facilitate an ethical decision-making process;
- To promote reflective practice;
- To help address moral discomfort or moral distress experienced by staff members and physicians;
- To enhance the capacity of stakeholders to identify ethical issues and use appropriate frameworks/approaches toward ethical decision-making. See [Appendix B-1 and B-2](#) for the organization's ethical decision-making framework tools.
- To propose, assist with, or lead, when appropriate, follow-up measures to ensure a more durable and proactive resolution to the ethical challenge identified; these measures can include debriefing sessions, educational rounds, or policy/guideline development.

The Ethicist and VP Practice, Academics & CNE are accountable for this Framework at Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences. Accountability is monitored by the Senior Management Team, and Board of Directors.

ACCESS TO CONSULTATIONS	
Requestor of Consultation	<p>When an issue of ethical concern arises with respect to the care of an individual patient or patients in general, and when those who have made initial attempts to address the ethical issue(s), for example, by using the framework set out in Appendix B, believe they could benefit from assistance in this area, a request for such assistance may be made, at any time, to the Ethicist by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a patient; • a family member directly involved in the patient's care; • the patient's legal guardian; • a member of the health care team directly involved in the patient's care

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any physician, hospital staff member, governor, or volunteer concerned about an ethical issue related to clinical care or organizational practice. <p>Although individuals involved in the patient's care can refuse to participate in an ethics consultation, no one has the right to obstruct or interfere with the consultation process (i.e. by blocking access to the patient record or preventing others from requesting or participating in a consultation).</p> <p>A request for an ethics consultation can be submitted by e-mail at ethics@ontarioshores.ca, or by calling the Ethics Office at extension 6046. Emergencies after hours should be referred to the Administrator-on-Call.</p>
Ethicist	<p>After a consultation request has been received, it will proceed in the following manner:</p> <p>Step 1: <u>Requesting the consultation.</u> This request will be received by an available Ethicist, and will be followed-up within 1 business day of receipt of the request. More urgent requests will be treated on a case-by-case basis. This follow-up will clarify from the individual requesting the consultation the reason for the request (i.e., the ethical question or issue) and the pertinent background information. Depending on the situation, this follow up may be done in person, over the phone, or through e-mail. For consultations concerning a patient's care, the gathering of background information may involve speaking with other relevant stakeholders (e.g. staff, patient, family members) and reviewing the patient's health record.</p> <p>Step 2: <u>Determining the level of response required.</u> Consultations may be completed over the phone or via e-mail for less complex or more factual questions, or they may require more active involvement (e.g. attending a committee meeting, family conference, or team meeting, speaking directly with the patient/family). In collaboration with the parties involved in the consultation, the Ethicist determines the appropriate response based on the complexity of the situation, the amount of additional information required, and the needs of the individual(s) requesting the consultation.</p>

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	<p>Step 3: Consultation with others as appropriate. To assist with the resolution of an ethical issue, the Ethicist may seek input from other professionals. These may include other staff members at Ontario Shores, Regional Ethics Hub team members, or colleagues from the University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics. Patient privacy and confidentiality will be maintained in keeping with applicable laws and policy at Ontario Shores.</p> <p>Step 4: Ongoing involvement (if required) and follow-up. Some situations may require ongoing ethics support, such as policy-related and organizational issues or complex clinical cases that evolve over time. For all consultations, effort will be made to follow up with those involved in the consult to record the outcomes and offer continued support.</p>
NOTIFICATION	
Ethicist	When a request for an ethics consultation is received directly from a patient and/or family member, notify the Most Responsible Practitioner, and the Clinical Manager or delegate to inform them of the consultation request, if they were not already involved in the request to consult.
DOCUMENTATION	
Ethicist	When a consultation involves direct patient/family contact, and the decision relates to the care of the patient, the Ethicist may document directly in the medical record.
Ethicist	Enter every consultation into the Ethics Consultation Database for statistical monitoring of activities. This information is used to identify trends in the organization's ethical issues, challenges, and situations. The de-identified aggregate information will also be brought to the attention of Integrated Quality, Program and Services Committee (IQPSC), the Medical Advisory Committee (MAC), the Senior Management Team (SMT), and the Board of Directors annually, and may be presented to others at their request. Information entered in the database or presented to Ontario Shores

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	Committees is de-identified and is meant to capture general activities and specific types of consultation requests for the generation of departmental reports and does not contain personal health information.
CONSULTATION FOLLOW-UP	
Ethicist	<p>Depending on the nature of the ethics consultation, follow-up from the ethics consultation service may include one or more of the following services which the Ethicist can provide or support:</p> <p><u>Ethics Debriefing</u> When ethically challenging situations occur, members of the interdisciplinary team can be left with a sense of moral discomfort or distress. An ethics debriefing session provides both emotional and didactic support for those members of the care team involved in such situations. In particular, debriefings are intended to provide a morally open space for reflective dialogue, sharing of experience, and prospective problem solving. The goal is to increase participants' abilities and confidence in dealing with morally troubling situations, to provide an environment for frank discussion of those situations, and to provide the opportunity to plan effective management of similar situations in future. Ethics debriefing sessions are not the same as Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD), which address all forms of distress following a critical/traumatic event, with primary focus on the psychological trauma.</p> <p><u>Ethics Education</u> A particular consultation may identify a need for an ethics education event, which can be designed to enhance ethics knowledge, decision-making skills, as well as, to help staff address similar ethical considerations that can arise in the future.</p> <p><u>Policy Review or Development</u> An ethics consultation can identify an organizational need for revision or development of a policy or guideline to support decision-making in similar situations.</p>

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