

IDEA: Ethical Decision-Making Framework Template

This worksheet is designed as a tool to guide you through the process in dealing with an ethical issue. There is a fundamental commitment to develop and support effective, excellent and sustainable health care for the entire community served.

Our Values: Integrity, Compassion & Collaboration

STEP 1: **I**NFORMATION GATHERING & **D**ESCRIBE SITUATION

A) Gather information/facts on the case:

A) Consider:

- *Re-state the details of the case*
- *What are the main issues or areas of concern/tension?*
- *Who are the individuals involved/who else needs to be involved?*
- *How does the client's history/prognosis affect this case?*
- *Are there other factors to consider, including company policies, directives and regulation?*
- *Identify stakeholder's values and interests & "Contextual Constraints"*
- *Include Stakeholders if possible. Are there conflicting interests between stakeholders? What would the absent stakeholders say?*
- *Stakeholders may include patients (current and future), providers, community groups, taxpayer, etc.*
- *Clarify the question. Narrow question down to manageable proportions.*
- *Separate Clinical, Legal and Ethical considerations*
- *Is there more information or education needed?*
- *What are the relationships, goals, beliefs and values involved*
- *What are the patient preferences, the medical indications, quality of life issues and contextual factors?*
- *Who is the appropriate decision-maker?*
- *How would you define the problem if you were on the other side?*
- *Identify what you don't know.*
- *What is the evidence? Resource implications?*

STEP 1: **I**NFORMATION GATHERING & **D**ESCRIBE SITUATION

B) Describe the different emotions

B) Consider:

- The emotions of: **1)** the client, **2)** family/others and **3)** you
- Examine the emotional factors influencing each individual:
✓existing feelings ✓loyalties ✓values ✓biases ✓prior experiences
- Separate Clinical, Legal & Ethical (Value) Facets

Ask yourself:

- How do I feel about this particular client/family?
- How are my life experiences influencing my reaction?
- What are the family/cultural/societal traditions and customs that are influencing my reaction?

STEP 1: **I**NFORMATION GATHERING & **D**ESCRIBE SITUATION

C) Identify ethical issues (i.e. what ethical principles are in conflict?)

Principle	Explain the Issue

C) Consider:

- What ethical principles/values are involved? i.e.,
 - Dignity
 - Tolerance
 - Needs
 - Solidarity
 - Beneficence
 - Confidentiality
 - Non-Maleficence
 - Fair & Equitable Access
 - Conflict of Interest
 - Stewardship/duty
 - Duty of Care
 - Informed Choice & Empowerment
 - Commitment to Quality Services
 - Relationship Among Community Organizations
 - Autonomy
 - Transparency
 - Equality
 - Privacy
 - Justice/Fair
 - Reciprocity
 - Maximize good
 - Rights
 - Patient-centered
 - Quality
 - Disclosure
 - Trust
 - Safety
 - Public Interest
 - Advocacy
 - Not For Profit
 - Proportionality
 - Conflict of Interest
 - Health & Well Being
 - Non-discrimination
 - Individual Liberty
 - Evidence
- What values are in conflict?
- Standards of Practice Met.
- What is the conflict? Are the interests in conflict legitimate?

STEP 2: EXPLORE OPTIONS & ANALYSE

D) Explore options and consider their strengths and weaknesses

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	D) Consider: <i>Brainstorm & discuss options either alone or with peers. Remember to:</i> • Be creative and use your imagination • Consider a compromise • Predict the outcomes for each alternative • Question whether the alternative fits with the client/family values • Question whether the alternative meets the company policies, directives and regulations • Prioritize and re-examine against values • Can the decision be enforced? • Is the decision consistent with the mission, vision, strategic plan and goals, values and guiding principles, current policy? • What are the consequences? • Avoid rationalizations • Whom does the decision injure? • What are the relevant duties, values, legal requirements, and standards? • What is the impact on the person, health, strategy, systems and organization? Seek help if necessary and consult with the person you report to.

STEP 3: **A**CT ON YOUR DECISION & EVALUATE

E) Develop an action plan (Note: the actual plan should be documented in the chart)

E) Consider:

Choose the best option available taking into account:

- *Reasons for choice – are they relevant?*
- *Does it pass the “sniff test” – would you be ok if the decision was on the front page of the Toronto Star?*
- *What is your gut feeling*
- *Is it transparent*
- *As everyone’s demands cannot be expected to be satisfied, would an impartial and fair observer accept the decision and reasons upon which it is made?*

Explain the reasons for the chosen decision over the alternatives.

- *What is the most ethically justifiable option and why?*
- *Present your suggested alternative and action plan to the client and those involved in such a way that it allows them to accept the plan*
- *Re-examine the alternatives if other factors come to light, if the situation changes, or if an agreement cannot be reached*
- *Determine when to evaluate the plan*
- *Is there a need to provide explicit information or education strategy to get the decision, justification and reasons out to forestall future misunderstanding and unrest?*
- *Document, communicate and implement the plan*

STEP 3: **A**CT ON YOUR DECISION & EVALUATE

F) Evaluate the Plan

F) Consider:

- What was the outcome of the plan?
- Are changes necessary?
- Document the evaluation

G) Self-evaluate your decision

G) Consider:

- How do you feel about the decision and the outcome?
- What would you do differently next time? What would you do the same?
- What have you learned about yourself?
- What have you learned about this decision-making process?
- Are there preventive strategies that should be put in place?

The right choice will be consistent with one's conscience; is respectful of values and wishes of the adult, competent patient; avoids dehumanizing/degrading anyone; honors duties to stakeholders; is justifiable by appealing to bioethical principles; critically considers all relevant factors including short & long term benefits & burdens; and is such that reasonable people are likely to choose similarly.

If no ethical decision can be made, consider who is most appropriate to make decision, is there a conflict resolution policy, would a quality case review help, should external mediation services be used, is the court system necessary.