

Section: Corporate- Administration
Approved By: Board of Governors
Approved On: 11/12/23

POL.ALL.8814
Document Status: Current

PURPOSE:

Having an ethics framework helps promote ethical behaviour and practices throughout an organization, and clarifies ethical issues when they arise.

The documents contained in this Integrated Ethics Framework include:

- The ***Mission, Vision, and Values*** for Ross Memorial Hospital.
- The ***Board Accountability Statement***.
- The ***IDEA Ethics Framework Tool*** intended to support clinical ethical decision-making.
- The ***Accountability for Reasonableness (A4R) Ethics Framework Tool*** intended to support organizational ethical decision-making and priority setting.

Taken together these documents form the written foundation for ethical conduct and decision-making at Ross Memorial Hospital, and support the Hospital's core values of Respect, Integrity, Compassion, and Excellence.

This policy does not apply to research ethics issues. For review of the ethical implications of research, to determine whether a research project requires ethics approval, or when new innovations are considered research and a process to assess the implications of and approve patient participation in research projects is required, please see policy [**PROC.ADM.8345**](#)

POLICY STATEMENT:

At Ross Memorial Hospital, this Integrated Ethics Framework shall guide all staff, physicians, volunteers, and members of the Board of Directors in their conduct, and will serve as a resource by providing a standardized approach to working through ethical issues and making decisions.

DEFINITION(S):

Ethical issue: Fundamentally, ethics is concerned with what makes actions right or wrong. 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 conflicts" can occur within individuals (e.g. you're pulled in two different directions by your personal or

professional values), between individuals or groups (i.e. a disagreement between staff members or between staff and patients/families), or at an institutional level (e.g. resource allocation issues).

Ethics consultation: “Consultation” in this context refers to the act of an individual or group of individuals conferring with the Ethics Consultation Service or an Ethicist, seeking clarification about a specific issue or information, or asking for guidance or a recommendation about a particular event or course of action (e.g. to discuss with a patient's family their expressed wishes when capable). Ethics consultation can take many different forms depending on the circumstances, ranging from informal (e.g. Ethicist answering a question via e-mail), to more formal involvement (e.g. to attending a team-family meeting).

Ethicist (Bioethicist): A member of the Ontario Shores Regional Ethics Hub who holds a graduate degree and specialized training in Bioethics. Ethicists on staff are usually members of academic institutions, such as the University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics.

Ontario Shores Regional Ethics Hub: The Regional Ethics Hub is a multi-partner ethics service providing clinical, organizational and research ethics support to the partners of the Hub, such as RMH. Partner organizations are supported by Ethicists who provide consultation and other services to those partners, thereby creating a community of practice that promotes inter-organizational collaboration and common ethics support.

Vision, Mission, and Values

All staff, physicians, volunteers, and members of the Board of Directors are expected to uphold the RMH Vision, Mission, and Values when acting as a representative of the organization.

**Vision**

Be the best for our patients, people and community.

Mission

Delivering on the promise of a better health care experience.

Values

In achieving our mission, the following values govern our relationships with patients, partners and colleagues:

- Compassion
- Respect
- Excellence
- Integrity

BOARD OF GOVERNORS – ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

The duty of the Board is to make decisions that are in the best interests of the Corporation. Decisions that are in the best interests of the Corporation will be decisions that further the Hospital's mission, move it toward its vision, are consistent with its values but also discharge its accountabilities. The Hospital has adopted a mission, vision and values statement.

To guide the Board in making decisions in the best interests of the Corporation, the Board has confirmed the following accountabilities of the Corporation:

To Patients	For quality services, patient safety, patient and family-centered care and best practices.
To the Community We Serve	For efficient utilization of resources, clear communication, transparent processes, advocacy, and expectation management.
To the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care	For compliance with applicable legislation, regulation and policies, including funding policies for capital.
To the Ontario Health Team	For performance of Health Services Accountability Agreement (HSAA), participation in OHT-led initiatives, expenditure management and performance management.
To Donors	For financial stewardship.
To Staff, Physicians and Volunteers	For establishing and communicating expectations, providing a safe work environment, and providing an exceptional workplace.
To Health System Partners	For cooperation and collaboration.
To Members of the Corporation	For complying with the by-laws and applicable legislation as it governs the Corporation, and for the achievement of its mission and vision in a manner consistent with its values and accountabilities.

IDEA ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK TOOL

Thinking about ethics is an integral part of service delivery for all involved in health care. Ethics is about making 'right' or 'good' choices, and providing reasons for those choices. Unfortunately, which options are 'right' or 'good,' can often be unclear. It is for this reason that the IDEA Framework was developed. This framework provides a fair, step-by-step process to assist in the navigation and resolution of complex clinical ethical issues that arise in the delivery of health care.

The IDEA Decision-Making Framework

1. IDENTIFY the facts	2. DETERMINE ethical principles in conflict
3. EXPLORE the options	4. ACT and evaluate

<p><u>Step 1: Identify the Facts</u></p> <p>Identify what is known versus what is not known.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Indications • Patient Preferences • Quality of Life, and • Contextual Features, <p>Users of the framework should take into account all of the relevant considerations and stakeholders; this often includes facts that may not be known initially.</p>	<p><u>Step 2: Determine Ethical Principles in Conflict</u></p> <p>Identifying the ethical principles in conflict will not provide solutions; however, this step will assist in further clarifying and articulating the issues.</p> <p>Common ethical principles to consider might include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy • Beneficence (or doing good) • Non-maleficence (or doing no harm) or • Justice
<p><u>Step 3: Explore The Options</u></p> <p>The intent of this section is to brainstorm different alternatives and to consider the potential outcomes and impacts of each one (i.e., evaluate the potential positive and negative considerations of each option).</p> <p>Do the options fit with the patient's preferences?</p> <p>Do the options comply with corporate policy, professional standards, and the law?</p>	<p><u>Step 4: Act and Evaluate</u></p> <p>Develop and document the action plan in the patient's chart.</p> <p>Evaluate the plan. Were the intended results obtained, or is additional follow-up and/ or action required? Ongoing documentation and communication of the evaluation is necessary.</p> <p>Self-evaluate your decision. What have you learned?</p>

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR REASONABLENESS (A4R) ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING TOOL

In recognizing that not all ethical issues that arise in health care are clinical in nature, an ethical decision-making framework has also been accepted for organizational decision-making. The Accountability for Reasonableness Framework (A4R) is based on the notion of public accountability which requires that reasons and rationales for limit-setting decisions be publically available. In Organizational limit-setting decisions, it is very difficult to agree on fair outcomes or fair principles. This makes using a clinical decision-making tool for these issues challenging. The goal of this framework is to ensure that a fair process is available for stakeholders to follow, and expectations are set to consider relevant values in the justification of organizational decisions. Five of such values are considered below:

<u>Value</u>	<u>Description</u>
Empowerment	Efforts should be made to minimize power differences in the decision-making context and to optimize participation.
Relevance	Decisions should be made explicitly with stakeholder views in mind, and there should be opportunities for stakeholders to be engaged in the decision-making process.
Transparency	Decisions should be publicly defensible. The process by which decisions were made must be open to scrutiny and the basis upon which decisions are made should be publicly accessible to affected stakeholders.
Revisions and Appeals	There should be opportunities to revisit and revise decisions as new information emerges, as well as mechanisms to address disputes and complaints.
Compliance	There should be either voluntary or public regulation of the process to make sure that the other four values are met.

REFERENCE(S):

Accreditation Canada, Qmentum. (2018). Standards – Leadership.

Gibson, J.L., D.K. Martin and P.A. Singer. "Priority Setting in Hospitals: Fairness, Inclusiveness, and the Problem of Institutional Power Differences." *Soc. Med.* . 2005 Dec;61 (11):2355-62. Epub 2005 Jun 9; and Daniels N, Sabin JE. *Setting limits fairly: Can we learn to share medical resources?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002

Markham Stouffville Hospital Integrated Ethics Framework, 2018

Ontario Hospital Association, *Guide to Good Governance*, second edition

Toronto Central CCAC - Community Ethics Network. July 2008 document entitled, "Ethical Decision-Making in the Community Health and Support Sector, Community Ethics Toolkit"