ETHICS SERVICE

The framework on this card offers a way of thinking through situations that requires making difficult ethical decisions. It was developed by the Ethics Consultant with members of the Bioethics Committee of St. Joseph’s Hospital in Hamilton. It is a way of trying to make sure that the right questions are asked while making difficult decisions, and it offers a step by step process for working through those questions.

Help from the Ethics Consultant for ethics case consultation or for discussions on ethical problems may be requested by any member of the health care team, by patients or persons receiving care or their families by contacting the Chair of the Ethics Committee of St. Mary’s General Hospital, Sandra Hett at (519) 749-6578 ext 1905 or by contacting the Ethics Consultant directly at the phone number below.

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1. Acknowledge Feelings

What are your “gut” reactions?, biases?, loyalties?

What are your initial feelings about this case?

2. Identify the Problem

State the problem clearly.

- What seems to create the difficulty:
- Is there conflict between individuals?

Where is the conflict?

3. Determine Ethically Relevant Facts

Issues to consider for the health care provider:

a. Clinical factors:
- diagnosis, prognosis, certainty?

b. Psycho-social factors?
- history, family situations?

- What are the relevant facts?
- All perspectives obtained?
- Whose account of “facts” counts?
### 4. Consider alternatives

Issues to consider for the health care provider:

- **a. What are the alternative courses of action?**
  - *All options should be seriously considered before eliminating any.*

- **b. What are the likely consequences?**
  - Example: medical
  - quality of life
  - relationships
  - legal
  - moral/spiritual

### 5. Examine Values

Issues to consider:

- **a. Preferences of the patient or person receiving care:**
  - values, wishes, goals beliefs?

- **b. Are others’ values relevant?**

- **c. Which of the values are in conflict?**
  - *What is the problem?*
  - *Whose values conflict?*
  - *Economics involved?*

### 6. Evaluate Alternatives

**Issues to consider:**

- **a. Identify the decision-maker(s).**
  - Who speaks for the patient or person receiving care?

- **b. Rank values.**

- **c. Justify ranking. By what principles?**
  - Respect for person
  - Beneficence
  - Common good
  - Burden/Benefit
  - Organizational mission/values

- **d. Evaluate consequences of alternatives in terms of principles.**

### 7. Articulate Your Decision

**Issues to consider**

- **a. Which alternative best reflects the ranking of values?**

- **b. Which alternative best balances more of the values?**

- **c. Have any other alternatives come to light?**

### 8. Implementation Plan

**Issues to consider**

- **a. How best to communicate decisions?**

- **b. Who needs to know it?**

- **c. Who needs to act?**