Ontario Shores
Centre for Mental Health Sciences

IDEA ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK TOOL[1]

Thinking about ethics is an integral part of service delivery for all involved in health care. Ethics is about making the best available choices, and providing reasons for those choices. Unfortunately, which options are best, 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

Step 1: Identify the Facts	Step 2: Determine Ethical Principles in Conflict
Identify what is known versus what is not known: • Medical Indications • Patient Preferences • Quality of Life, and • Contextual Features 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.	Identifying the ethical principles in conflict will not provide solutions; however, this step will assist in further clarifying and articulating the issues. Common ethical principles to consider might include, but are not limited to: • Autonomy • Beneficence (or doing good) • Non-maleficence (or doing no harm) or • Justice
Step 3: Explore Options	**Step 4: Act and Evaluate**
The intent of this section is to brainstorm different alternatives and to consider the potential outcomes and impacts of each one (e.g., evaluate the potential positive and negative considerations of each option). Do the options fit with the patient's preferences? Do the options comply with policy and law?	Develop and document the action plan in the patient's chart. 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. Self-evaluate your decision. What have you learned?

Please contact the Ethics Department if you would like assistance using this tool, or if you have an ethical issue or concern: ethics@ontarioshores.ca.

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(Modified from TORONTO CENTRAL COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRE (COMMUNITY ETHICS NETWORK), JULY 2008 document entitled, "Ethical Decision-Making in the Community Health and Support Sector, Community Ethics Toolkit")