ETHICS RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES

WRHA Ethics Services

For more information, connect with ethics resources in your site or program, or contact WRHA Ethics Services at 204-926-1312 or ethics@wrha.mb.ca
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What is Ethics?

Ethics is about values and human relationships. Ethics is the way we decide what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad.

If you’ve ever asked...

- Why does this matter?
- What does this person want?
- Is this what we ought to do?
- How do we know we’re doing the right thing?

...then you’ve been looking at health care through an ethics lens.

Ethics matters to us all.
Everyone has a role to play in fostering an ethical climate in health care. Ethics must be integrated into health care processes, policies and practices.

Ethics is...

- A major theme in organizational ethics literature
- A major expectation in Accreditation Canada standards
- Foundational to the WRHA’s Ethics Strategic Framework
- The guiding philosophy for Ethics Services in the Winnipeg Health Region
- The philosophical motivation for the Manitoba Provincial Health Ethics Network (MB-PHEN).
WRHA Ethics Services is a regional point of contact for ethics.

We can be reached at 204-926-1312 or email ethics@wrha.mb.ca.

Ethics Services provides leadership or support to many ethics initiatives including ethics workshops, rounds, presentations, forums and networking sessions; policy review, and engagement with over 40 Winnipeg ethics committees and teams. It also provides leadership and coordination to the Regional Ethics Council.

Ethics Services is staffed by a Director, Ethics Services and Ethics Medical Advisor. The Director and Ethics Medical Advisor also work provincially with the Manitoba Provincial Health Ethics Network (MB-PHEN) in the roles of Chair and Ethics Medical Advisor, respectively.
The Ethics Strategic Framework is grounded in the WRHA Mission, Vision, Values and Commitments and aligned with the Strategic Directions, Priorities and Operational Actions. The Framework’s Goal and Strategies are as follows:

**GOAL:** To inform, guide and enhance the Region’s commitment to the advancement of ethics in its sites, programs and services.

1. **Applied Ethics**
2. **Research Ethics**
3. **Ethics Capacity Building**

Decisions with ethical implications are made at all levels of health care organizations all the time. It could be argued that nearly every decision made in health care involves some ethical element. Decisions must be made and carried out by individuals and small groups, and can have significant impacts on patients, families, staff, the organization, and public trust. In some areas of the province, staff has access to clinical ethics consultants who can mediate or facilitate solutions to difficult situations. Especially where consultation services are not available, every staff member who is or could be involved in ethical decisions must have skills present in the course of their work, and to manage any moral distress that accompanies ethical situations.

The first step in any difficult decision is to identify resources and strategies for resolution. There are many resources within the Winnipeg Health Region. The Ethics Resource Algorithm walks users through a triage process for finding help.
WRHA Ethics Resource Algorithm for Direct Care Contexts

Ethics Resource Algorithm

Conflict is identified by a staff member or client/family

Describe the conflict. What is the nature of the problem?

- Communication problem
- Values conflict
- Disagreement on goals of care or therapeutic options
- True dilemma: must choose between more than one good (or bad) option
- Not really sure!

This may be an ethical issue

Review case with those involved, a trusted colleague or supervisor. Did this solve the issue?

Yes

Review case with your Level 2 Ethics Resource and any other available resources, e.g. site policy, decision-making frameworks, resources from www.MB-PHEN.ca. Did this solve the issue?

Yes

Consult your site’s Ethics Committee or Consultation Service. Did this solve the issue?

Yes

Resolved: identify learning opportunities and appropriate forum for sharing learning.

No or N/A

No or N/A

No or N/A

Call Ethics Services

Refer to appropriate department (e.g. HR, legal, Nursing Practice Council, Union, etc.)
Regional Ethics Council

The Regional Ethics Council focuses on the integration of ethics throughout the Winnipeg Health Region. The Council works on initiatives to enhance ethics resources, strategies and processes. The Council facilitates review of regional ethics issues, but does not review ethics issues related to individual cases. Membership is interprofessional and representative of a range of health care contexts. Members demonstrate both a strong commitment to, and practical engagement with, the advancement of regional ethics initiatives and strategies. The Council’s Work Plan is congruent with the *Ethics Strategic Framework*. Its activities to date have contributed to the following resources and strategies:

- Toolkits for Health Ethics Committees
- Intercultural Ethics Events
- The annual Ethics Forum
- The Case of the Month blog ([caseofthemonth.wordpress.com](http://caseofthemonth.wordpress.com))
- Review of regional policies and evidence informed practice tools

Contact the Regional Ethics Council at 204-926-1312 or email ethics@wrha.mb.ca.

DID YOU KNOW?

Over 40 Winnipeg health care sites and programs have ethics committees or teams.
Applied Ethics Strategy

Ethical decisions happen frequently in health care. Some can be very distressing, and all have significant implications for the patient, family and staff involved. Some ethical questions are organizational in nature – that is, they concern issues and conflicts of how the organization functions and makes decisions. Other ethical situations are clinical, and directly involve patients or patient care.

Whatever the cause, people facing difficult ethical decisions need resources and strategies to help them work through the problem and arrive at a solution that is best for the situation, all things considered. A decision-making framework can be very helpful.

Decision-making frameworks are systematic and thorough. Frameworks can help to ensure no important considerations are missed or forgotten in the process. They can also help address some of the moral distress that goes along with difficult ethical situations, by ensuring a good process is followed and a decision is made that everyone can understand and live with, even when they might not agree 100%.

In the end, a framework can help staff and patients feel comfortable that everything was discussed and the best possible decision was made.

This framework is an amalgamation of several excellent tools that are in use across Canada. It can help guide the discussion about the ethical implications of various courses of action, when you are faced with a tough decision.

The steps in this framework do not necessarily need to be followed in order. Nor will all of them apply in every situation. For a full explanation of the framework, please visit the Manitoba Provincial Health Ethics Network (MB-PHEN) website at www.mb-phen.ca.
Quick Reference Guide

**Pre-Consideration Questions**

1. Is this an ethical issue?
2. Who can help me with this problem?

**Clarifying and Addressing the Issue**

3. Identify the Problem
4. Analyze your Biases
5. Clarify the Question
6. List the Major Stakeholders
7. State the Facts
8. Describe the Ethical Considerations
   a. Clinical Issues
   b. List the Risks and Consequences
   c. Consider Applicable Rules and Duties
   d. List the Moral Principles Involved
   e. Consider all Relationships
9. List Options
10. Make a Choice
11. Make an Action Plan

**Evaluation**

12. How do you feel?
13. Is there any distress or residue?
14. Are there implications for policy?
“Respect for human dignity requires that research involving humans be conducted in a manner that is sensitive to the inherent worth of all human beings and the respect and consideration that they are due.”¹

For information on regional research processes, contact the Chair, WRHA Research Access and Approval Committee at 204-926-7127 or cmetge@wrha.mb.ca.

Ethics Education is an essential component of ethics capacity building initiatives. The following are some of the ethics education opportunities created and offered by WRHA Ethics Services. Call or email for more information, to suggest ideas for a new workshop, or to request a presentation of specific interest to your site or program.

**Level I: Health Ethics Workshop**

The *Level I: Health Ethics Workshop* is an interactive two-day workshop designed for staff interested in the integration of ethics into clinical practice. Participants increase their knowledge of ethics and how it is applied to healthcare; begin to develop skills to consider ethically charged issues; learn effective techniques to seek out healthcare ethics information; and increase awareness of ethics resources, strategies & networking opportunities.

- This workshop meets the pre-requisite for the *Level II: Ethics Resource Workshop*.

**Level II: Ethics Resource Workshop**

The *Level II: Ethics Resource Workshop* is an interactive two-day workshop designed to support the WRHA Clinical Ethics Resource Strategy. It is for experienced health care providers willing to develop skills to assist their colleagues as peer resources when ethical issues or questions arise. Participants learn an ethics framework to apply to clinical ethics issues, and increase their awareness of ethics education techniques, specialized resources and networking opportunities.

- **Pre-requisite:** Completion of introductory ethics coursework: e.g., the *Level I: Health Ethics Workshop*, or a similar non-credit or credit course relevant to health ethics.
Ethics in the Health Care Organization Workshop

The *Ethics in the Health Care Organization Workshop* is an interactive one-day workshop designed for staff working in a range of health care roles who are interested in creating and sustaining an ethical health care organization. Participants reflect on the ethical dimensions of their health care roles and responsibilities; discuss organizational ethics in the health care context; apply ethics frameworks to health care management issues such as conflict of interest, resource allocation, and human resources ethics.

- This workshop can be tailored to specific regional, site or program contexts. A half-day version is also available.

Strategies & Work Plan Development for Ethics Committees

*Strategies & Work Plan Development for Ethics Committees* is a half-day session designed for health ethics. This workshop focuses on ways in which an ethics committee can build its strengths to be an effective and accessible ethics resource in its health care context. *Accreditation Canada* expectations related to frameworks and processes for health ethics are addressed, and the committee’s work plan is reaffirmed, revised or developed, as needed.

Ethics in Accreditation Presentations

30-60 minute *Ethics in Accreditation* presentations are provided on request to regional sites, programs or teams. This is an opportunity to discuss the *Accreditation Canada* Qmentum Standards relevant to ethics, identify current ethical strengths and resources, and explore the potential for future learning and initiatives related to ethics processes and frameworks.

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Can’t Find What You’re Looking For?

Contact WRHA Ethics Services at 204-926-1312 or ethics@wrha.mb.ca.

Connect with ethics resources in your site or program.

Access the ethics sections on the WRHA website.

Visit the MB-PHEN² website at www.mb-phen.ca, a portal for Manitoba health care providers to access health ethics resources and strategies in Manitoba and beyond.

² Created in 2009 through a collaboration of Manitoba Regional Health Authorities, the goal of the Manitoba Provincial Health Ethics Network (MB-PHEN) is to advance health care ethics in Manitoba through integration, collaboration and accountability.