

Instructions for the Ethics Consultation Coordinator

Your Role and Responsibilities

The aim of ethics consultation in health care is to help patients, staff, and other parties resolve ethical concerns. As coordinator of the ethics consultation function in your facility, your role is to ensure consistency and quality in your ethics consultation approach. You're also a core member of the facility's IntegratedEthics Council. To fulfill these responsibilities, you must have not only the knowledge and skills required for ethics consultation, but also management skills.

Broadly, your responsibilities are to:

1. Demonstrate expertise in the IntegratedEthics approach to ethics consultation

This Ethics Consultation Toolkit contains everything you'll need to ensure that you're up to speed: an overview of IntegratedEthics; descriptions of your role and responsibilities as coordinator of the ethics consultation function as well as a description of the responsibilities of the IntegratedEthics Council; the IntegratedEthics timeline to help you organize tasks and activities; and the ethics consultation video course. The toolkit also provides communications materials, evaluation tools for the ethics consultation service, and information about online learning modules on ethics in health care.

2. Manage your ethics consultation service

As Ethics Consultation Coordinator you're responsible for overseeing the operation of your facility's consultation service. This includes organizing the service and ensuring that it has needed resources. You'll select ethics consultants and ensure that they are appropriately trained in the IntegratedEthics approach to consultation, as well as assess their proficiency and ensure that they engage in appropriate skills development. It's your job to see that consultants collaborate and work well together.

Your responsibilities also include implementing the ECWeb online database tool (see Tab 6 for description) for managing the consultation process in your facility, evaluating the quality of your consultation service, and overseeing ongoing quality improvement.

3. Ensure integration

The ethics consultation function should build on existing strengths and include mechanisms to achieve horizontal and vertical integration with other groups in the organization. In addition to participating in the IntegratedEthics Council, you'll need to establish relationships with stakeholders, including facility leaders, who may bring ethics questions to the service.

4. Build visibility and support for ethics consultation

You're responsible for creating awareness of and support for the ethics consultation function. This requires working closely with the IntegratedEthics Program Officer, who oversees communications about the IntegratedEthics program and its core functions throughout the facility.

5. Network externally

Along with the IntegratedEthics Program Officer, you'll share information about your function's activities, best practices, and lessons learned through a series of national teleconferences and other forums.

On the following pages, you'll find a timeline and brief descriptions of the specific tasks associated with your responsibilities and those of the coordinators of each of the core functions of IntegratedEthics. All of these tasks should be completed during the initial implementation phase; thereafter, many of the activities will need to be repeated periodically and/or maintained.

Timeline

Ethics Consultation Coordinator	Mo 1	Mo 2	Mo 3	Mo 4	Mo 5	Mo 6	Mo 7	Mo 8	Mo 9	Mo 10	Mo 11	Mo 12
Educate Yourself												
Read EC toolkit and review primer (M 1)												
Complete EC video course (M 1)												
Engage with the National IE Community												
Register with the national IntegratedEthics website (M 1)												
Participate in IE teleconferences (M 3 thru 12)												
Understand Your Current Ethics Program												
Contribute to completion of IE Facility Workbook (M 2 & 3)												
Organize the EC Function												
Organize the EC function (M 1 & 2)												
Identify members of EC function (M 1 & 2)												
Draft an EC policy (M 12)												
Train Ethics Consultants in the IE model and the CASES Approach												
Distribute IE communications materials (M 3)												
Distribute EC primer (M 3)												
Schedule and organize EC video course (M 4)												
Discuss EC results from IE Facility Workbook (M 5)												
Use the CASES Approach												
Implement ECWeb in your facility (M 4)												
Continuously improve your EC process (M 4 thru 12)												
Improve Ethics Consultants' Proficiency												
Assess and track EC proficiency (M 6 thru 7)												
Implement professional development plans (M 8 thru 12)												

Description of Tasks

Educate Yourself

Read EC toolkit and review primer. Reading the introduction to IntegratedEthics (Tab 1) and IntegratedEthics communications materials (Tab 4) is an important step to ensure that you understand the broad concepts and aims of IntegratedEthics. You'll also want to review the ethics consultation primer, *Ethics Consultation: Responding to Ethics Questions in Health Care*, which lays out the essential elements and success factors for this function. You'll return to this document time and again as you implement and refine the ethics consultation function in your facility.

Complete EC video course. Once you've reviewed the ethics consultation primer and the CASES approach, take the ethics consultation video course. The course walks you through the steps of CASES, using specific examples.

Engage with the National IE Community

Register with the national IntegratedEthics website. The IntegratedEthics website (www.ethics.va.gov/IntegratedEthics) is designed to support continuous learning among VA's IntegratedEthics community. The site contains all the materials in the IntegratedEthics toolkits (including the video courses), links to online learning modules, and many other resources and tools. It will be updated regularly.

Participate in IE teleconferences. These conference calls provide a forum for facilities to solve problems and share solutions in implementing IntegratedEthics. Ethics Center staff will moderate the teleconferences and focus on the needs of the attendees. The content of the calls may include discussing common problems, sharing best practices, or a question-and-answer session with a content expert.

Understand Your Current Ethics Program

Contribute to completion of IE Facility Workbook. The IntegratedEthics Program Officer is responsible for ensuring that the IntegratedEthics Facility Workbook is completed but may need your help collecting data. Specifically, you may be asked to assemble a team to complete the ethics consultation section of the workbook. You'll also review the results from the ethics consultation section and plan next steps to enhance ethics consultation in your facility.

Organize the EC Function

Organize the EC function. Once you have a handle on the IntegratedEthics approach to ethics consultation it's time to think about how you'll implement the three models for ethics consultation identified in the primer. Different models will be appropriate for different consultation requests and you'll want to understand how each model will work best in your facility. You'll also want to ensure that collectively your ethics consultants have appropriate expertise to work effectively in different models as the need arises.

Identify members of EC function. The ethics consultation function is only as effective as its ethics consultants, so choosing consultants is an important task. Review the list of your current ethics consultants and use the primer to help you decide whom to select for the IntegratedEthics consultation function. The goal is

for your ethics consultants to be proficient in the knowledge, skills, and character traits identified by the American Society for Bioethics and the Humanities in its *Core Competencies* report, which are discussed in the ethics consultation primer.

Draft an EC policy. The structure, function, and process of ethics consultation should be formalized in institutional policy. Your IntegratedEthics Council will develop overall policy for IntegratedEthics in your facility; you'll work with the council to draft the section governing consultation. Be sure to address all the topics outlined in the primer. The drafting process will help your team clarify and stay focused on your core mission. Don't wait for the final IntegratedEthics policy to begin implementing the guidance in the primer! Ethics consultants should begin using CASES as soon as they've read the primer and taken the video course, as described below.

Train Ethics Consultants in the IE model and the CASES Approach

Distribute IE communications materials. Ensure that members of the consultation service receive and read the introduction to IntegratedEthics (Tab 1) and communications materials (Tab 4) in this toolkit to familiarize themselves with the concepts and aims of IntegratedEthics.

Distribute EC primer. The success of ethics consultation hinges on well-informed ethics consultants. After you've educated yourself about the IntegratedEthics approach to ethics consultation and CASES, it's time to begin training your ethics consultants. All members of your ethics consultation service should carefully review the ethics consultation primer, *Ethics Consultation: Responding to Ethics Questions in Health Care*.

Schedule and organize EC video course. The ethics consultation video course is an excellent vehicle to promote team building and help educate members of your ethics consultation service about the IntegratedEthics approach to ethics consultation. See the training checklist for details. Keep track of who completes the course and when; follow facility procedures to ensure that consultants receive education credits for completing the course.

Discuss EC results from IE Facility Workbook. Discussing the ethics consultation section of the facility workbook will help you and your ethics consultation service to critically assess the service's activities and processes. The workbook will also help you to recognize what next steps you should take to improve ethics consultation in your facility.

Use the CASES Approach

Implement ECWeb in your facility. ECWeb is a secure, web-based database tool designed to reinforce sound ethics consultation practices, help ethics consultants manage consultation records, and support quality improvement activities. This tool walks consultants through the CASES process and enables them to document their consultation activities. To enroll your facility and get started using ECWeb, see the instructions on the IntegratedEthics website at vaww.ethics.va.gov/IntegratedEthics.

Continuously improve your EC process. Now that the members of your ethics consultation service have read the primer and completed the video course, and your facility has enrolled in ECWeb, you're ready to implement the IntegratedEthics approach to consultation, including using the CASES approach and ECWeb. Use

the ethics consultation primer as a reference as you proceed. As you complete each consultation, be sure to critically examine your consultation process so that you can continuously improve.

Improve Ethics Consultants' Proficiency

Assess and track EC proficiency. Consultants' proficiency is critical to the success of the ethics consultation function. You should administer the Ethics Consultant Proficiency Assessment Tool to each member of your ethics consultation service (including yourself) and use the Advanced Proficiency Tracking Log for your service as a whole. See the proficiency assessment tool instructions for details (Tab 6).

Implement professional development plans. You should address the knowledge and skill gaps in the consultation service identified through the proficiency assessment tool by designing individual professional development plans to ensure that consultants continuously develop their knowledge and skills.

IntegratedEthics Council—Instructions for Council Members

Your Role and Responsibilities

The aim of an IntegratedEthics program is to improve ethics quality by integrating three core functions: ethics consultation, preventive ethics, and ethical leadership. The IntegratedEthics Council is the body chiefly responsible for achieving this goal. The council is chaired by the Ethical Leadership Coordinator, who is ultimately responsible for the success of the program. The responsibilities of the council are to:

- coordinate the ethics consultation, preventive ethics, and ethical leadership functions
- ensure communication with relevant programs across the organization
- oversee the ethics consultation and preventive ethics functions
- develop and update policy pertaining to the IntegratedEthics program
- coordinate staff education regarding IntegratedEthics and ethics
- evaluate your facility's IntegratedEthics structures and processes
- evaluate ethics knowledge, practices, and culture in your facility
- improve specific ethics practices at your facility
- continuously improve your facility's IntegratedEthics program
- ensure that the facility meets accreditation standards for ethics
- ensure that the facility meets requirements of VHA policy related to ethics in health care

Broadly, your responsibilities are to:

1. Demonstrate expertise in the IntegratedEthics model

Members of the council act as representatives of the IntegratedEthics program across the facility and particularly in their home departments or services. You should be raising the visibility of the IntegratedEthics program and supporting the goals of the program to ensure its success. This role requires that you understand the activities of the council and each of the core functions of IntegratedEthics, serve as a spokesperson for the program in your department or service, encourage staff to participate in training activities, answer questions about the program and its functions, and participate in program activities as appropriate based on your skills and expertise.

2. Lead or participate in council activities

A tenet of excellence in health care is an ongoing commitment to quality improvement. All council members should participate in efforts to improve the quality of the IntegratedEthics program through use of the IntegratedEthics assessment tools and regular quality monitoring of program activities. You'll lead or participate in one or more council activities, which may include participating on a preventive ethics team, leading an education forum about IntegratedEthics for staff or other leaders, updating ethics-related policies, supporting efforts for accreditation readiness, or other activities as needed.

3. Ensure integration

The council is the key mechanism for integrating the ethics activities undertaken by departments, programs, services, and offices across your facility. Council members should represent diverse areas throughout the organization from which ethics issues arise, including clinical care services, research, and business administration. Council members are responsible for helping to identify ethics issues across the facility that might benefit from the work of the council, such as ethics quality gaps that might be appropriate for the preventive ethics team.

4. Monitor performance

The council is responsible for overseeing the activities of the IntegratedEthics program and acting to support its implementation. The council should ensure that the facility achieves the program's implementation goals, completes assessment tools and reports performance monitors to VISN leadership. The council is also responsible for developing plans and taking action on the findings from the IntegratedEthics Facility Workbook and Staff Survey. The council should establish mechanisms to monitor progress toward implementing these plans and the overall IntegratedEthics program effectively.

5. Network externally

All council members are invited to share their program's activities, best practices, and lessons learned. The National Center for Ethics in Health Care will provide forums where this can occur. Check our website, www.ethics.va.gov/IntegratedEthics, for more information.

Description of Tasks

Get Started

Get to know the IntegratedEthics Program. Reading the introduction to IntegratedEthics and the IntegratedEthics communications materials is an important first step to ensure that you understand the broad concepts and aims of IntegratedEthics. You'll also want to become familiar with the material in the three primers, *Ethics Consultation: Responding to Ethics Questions in Health Care*; *Preventive Ethics: Addressing Ethics Quality Gaps on a Systems Level*; and *Ethical Leadership: Fostering an Ethical Environment & Culture*. You'll return to these documents frequently as you support the launch of IntegratedEthics at your facility. Three IntegratedEthics video courses are also available to you. These courses walk you through important aspects of each of the functions. You may also want to complete one or more of the IntegratedEthics online learning modules to develop your understanding of the IntegratedEthics concept and its application.

Engage with the National IE Community

Register with the national IntegratedEthics website. Council members may wish to register with the IntegratedEthics website (vaww.ethics.va.gov/IntegratedEthics), which is designed to support continuous learning among VA's IntegratedEthics community. The site contains all the materials in the IntegratedEthics toolkits (including the video courses), links to online learning modules, and many other resources and tools. It will be updated regularly.

Understand Your Current Ethics Program

Participate in completion of the IE Facility Workbook. The IntegratedEthics Council is responsible for ensuring completion of the facility workbook. You should contribute your knowledge of facility structure and processes to help the council develop its plan for completing the workbook. You should also participate as needed to identify and implement appropriate responses to workbook findings.

Support administration of the IE Staff Survey. The IntegratedEthics Council is responsible for planning and monitoring the administration of the IntegratedEthics Staff Survey. You should support the council in administering the survey by encouraging staff in your department to participate. The council is also responsible for analyzing survey results and developing a plan to respond to any issues and concerns identified. Your first step is to help publicize the results of the survey, which is essential to demonstrate to staff members that their participation was both important and appreciated. It can also help to further demonstrate the importance of IntegratedEthics and generate greater awareness of your IntegratedEthics program. You will then work with your staff to implement activities developed by the council to respond to the survey results.

Participate in Assigned Council Duties

Coordinate staff education regarding IntegratedEthics and ethics. The council is responsible for taking a systematic approach to ensuring that staff throughout the facility are familiar with IntegratedEthics and knowledgeable about ethics in health care. The council, or a designated subcommittee, should apply a quality improvement approach to ensure that educational efforts are effective in meeting clearly defined

organizational needs. The IntegratedEthics primers, video courses, and online learning modules can serve as basic resources for staff education. Efforts to educate staff in ethics consultation and preventive ethics can be delegated to those functions. Ethics education should also be regularly incorporated into ongoing educational activities, such as grand rounds, case conferences, inservices, and annual meetings.

Update policy related to ethics in health care. In addition to developing policy for your IntegratedEthics program, the council is responsible for ensuring that facility policies relating to ethics in health care—such as informed consent for treatments and procedures, advance directives, or end-of-life care—meet the requirements of VA national policy in the relevant areas. The council or a designated subcommittee should also work with the preventive ethics team to identify and address local policy requirements—or lack of policy—that give rise to systemic ethics quality issues.

Ensure that the facility meets accreditation standards for ethics. The council is responsible for developing specific action plans to ensure that the facility meets accreditation standards around ethics and is ready to meet those standards on an ongoing basis. As of 2006, the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations includes 24 standards explicitly pertaining to ethics, patient rights, and organizational responsibilities (RI.1–RI.3.1). It is the council's responsibility to see that the facility meets these standards and those of other relevant accrediting bodies.