IntegratedEthics *in Action*

EDUCATING YOUR NEW EMPLOYEES: STRATEGIES FOR INTRODUCING INTEGRATEDETHICS AT NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATIONS

*E*very year, approximately 32,000 employees, volunteers, students, interns, and others join the VA system. Within their first days, all of them are required to attend a New Employee Orientation (NEO) to receive mandatory training on VA policies and topics related to their new roles. While VHA does not currently require that information about the IntegratedEthics (IE) program be included on the agenda, many facilities are already using this forum to introduce IE to the next generation of VHA personnel.

Contributors

- **Marian Baxter**, APRN, BC, IE Program Officer, Richmond (VA) VAMC

- **Kathryn Bucher**, RN, MSN, Director of Education, Training, and Development; Member, IE Committee, Southern Arizona VA HCS

- **JaNa' Cordes**, AA/Chief of Staff; IE Point of Contact, West Texas VA Health Care System

- **Lynn Dinehart**, MS, CCP, IE Program Officer and CBI Officer, Bath (NY) VAMC

- **Daniel J. Day**, LISCW, IE Program Officer, Washington DC VAMC

- **Marilys Gilbert**, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff; IE Program Officer, Martinsburg (WV) VAMC

- **Tim Maley**, IE/Customer Service Program Officer, Roudebush (IN) VAMC

- **Thomas H. Phillips**, Chief Chaplain; IE Program Officer, Tennessee Valley HCS

- **Gary Rolph**, Chief, Chaplain Service; IE Program Officer, Manchester (NH) VAMC

- **Veronica J. Scott,** MD, MPH, Preventive Ethics Coordinator, Tennessee Valley HCS

- **Douglas B. Sloan**, Preventive Ethics Coordinator, Louisville (KY) VAMC

This issue of IntegratedEthics in Action discusses IE content, presenters, and source material that some facilities have used for these NEO presentations. In addition, it provides suggestions for securing a time slot, developing and presenting the material, and finding the time to make it all happen. Information in this issue was supplied by IE team members from 10 facilities who agreed to share their experiences of presenting IE at NEOs. The contributors' names, IE roles, and facility affiliations are listed in the box below.

Placing IE on the NEO agenda

Once the IE program was rolled out, several contributors reported that they felt it was important to provide an IE overview during the NEO. At some facilities, such as Richmond VAMC, the presentations were also open to current staff who had not been otherwise exposed to the program.

"To help staff become aware of the program, the first thing we did was to incorporate IE into new staff orientations," said **Kathryn Bucher**. "The idea for presenting at the NEO stemmed from a brainstorming session during one of our IE Council meetings," said **Douglas B. Sloan**. "We were discussing ways in which to actively foster a culture of 'making it easy to do the right thing.' The idea quickly arose to start immediately with every employee coming into the facility."

IE team members were able to place IE on the NEO agenda in one of two ways: either by garnering support from facility leadership, or by appealing directly to their Education and Training and/or Human Resources departments. In many cases, the members of these departments already sat on the facility IE Council. According to Mr. Sloan, "With the support of the council and the HR Manager (who is a member of the council), we were up and running at the very next NEO. The key is to attain the backing and support of the council—and to have all the key players on the council."

Daniel J. Day explained to the Orientation Coordinator that their Medical Center Director valued the IE program and requested

that it be introduced at the beginning of employees' VA careers. **Chaplain Thomas H. Phillips** described the process as "serendipity." He said, "We were interested in adding IE to the agenda at a time that the Education and Training department was moving to a new format that featured more live speakers and fewer talking-head videos." Upon hearing this news, he contacted the department and received a half-hour time slot on the NEO agenda.

Measuring new employee response

"Introducing IE at the NEO really sets a positive tone and makes employees feel great about their new employer," said Mr. Sloan. "I think the presentation gives employees the sense that this is an ethical organization and we take ethics very seriously here. We want to set the tone right away with the new employees," added **JaNa' Cordes**. Chaplain Phillips remarked that, "As a result of learning about IE in the NEO, new people are noting that what we do is above and beyond what they were used to in the private sector."

> **IE during New Employee Orientation - setting a positive tone about VA.**

Moreover, because the IE presentations offer a face and number to call, there is some evidence that they may be encouraging new employees to use and become involved in the IE program early in their careers. **Dr. Veronica J. Scott**, for example, has determined that at least two requests for ethics referrals were made as a result of the NEO presentation. **Marian Baxter** reported receiving requests for consults from people who had recently attended the NEO. Ms. Baxter also noted that, just in the past six months, four new employees have become part of her facility's IE program as a direct result of learning about the initiative. Three are with the Ethics Consultation Service, and one recently joined the Preventive Ethics Team.

Steps for ensuring a successful presentation

IE team members who want to present the program at their facility's next NEO need to step up and work with their leaders and the Education and Training department. They should not be reticent, for example, to ask to be placed on the schedule. However,

they should be aware that their time commitment may be large, especially in facilities where NEOs take place every other week. To reduce this burden, the contributors recommended developing a script from IE materials available from the National Center for Ethics in Health Care (Ethics Center), and rotating the presenting duty among the IE team. (See sidebar for more details.) Several facilities developed local PowerPoint presentations by adapting the Ethics Center's template for their employees' needs and adding local contact information.

During the presentation, several contributors suggested that presenters ask members of the audience where they're going to be working, and what ethical concerns they might encounter in the course of their jobs. "Limit it to 30 minutes, and make it fun," advised Ms. Baxter. "Discuss cases that are going to grab their attention." (See box for examples of questions that have fueled discussion at some NEOs.)

Mr. Sloan concurred, "Always remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. We really strive hard to make our orientation high energy, informative, and fun. We have a dedicated a 30-minute time block that follows the Compliance and Business Integrity (CBI) presentation. We did this intentionally! CBI's mission is to 'do the right thing.' We follow with saying that IE 'makes it easy to do the right thing.' It's a perfect fit and really helps drive home our culture."

Most important of all, IE teams need to realize that the NEO presents a stellar (and perhaps singular) opportunity to reach new staff members and to spotlight the importance of the IE program. "A lot of our employees don't go to the facility Intranet site or use Outlook," said Chaplain Phillips. "The NEO, therefore, gives them a face, name, and way to access information about IE that they wouldn't normally get."

Anatomy of an IntegratedEthics Presentation at the New Employee Orientation

How long?	30 minutes (IE alone), or 1 hour (if combined with other ethics topics), generally during an established time slot on the agenda
What's a recommended agenda and format?	• Introduction, 5 minutes The body of the presentation can be mixed-media, incorporating at least two of the following: » "IntegratedEthics: Improving Ethics Quality in Health Care" (video), 10 minutes » IE PowerPoint slide show customized for the facility, 10 minutes » Prepared talk using IE case and non-case scenarios, 10 minutes » Q&A involving an ethics discussion that feeds off the video or PowerPoint content, 10 minutes • Conclusion, 5 minutes
Who should present?	Generally one person in one of the following positions: • IE function coordinator (most common: IE Program Officer or Preventive Ethics Coordinator) • New Employee Orientation Coordinator Some facilities rotate this responsibility among their IE team.
What are examples of topic areas?	• How does "ethics" relate to health care as well as other VHA facility functions? (continued next column)

What are examples of topic areas? (cont)	• How is IE different from previous ethics programs, such as medical ethics advisory boards or committees that were traditionally involved exclusively in health care? • What are the three core functions and the IE Council? How does IE fit into the governance structure at the facility? • What types of ethics concerns are addressed by each component? • What are examples of "case" and "non-case" consults? • What distinguishes IE from Compliance and Business Integrity (CBI) and the Office of Government Ethics (OGE)? How do they work together? • Where can information on the facility's IE program be accessed online? • How and when should a representative of the IE team be contacted? What is the procedure for requesting an ethics consultation at the facility?
What are examples of takeaway materials and resources that can be provided?	• Contact information for the function coordinators, including instructions for requesting an ethics consult, and the URL for the IE section of the facility Intranet • One-page flyer that introduces the IE program, purpose, and structure (generally based on the template provided by the National Center for Ethics in Health Care)

Anatomy of an IntegratedEthics Presentation at the New Employee Orientation (continued)

What are examples of takeaway materials and resources that can be provided? (cont)	• Other specialty IE marketing materials that are produced by facilities (e.g., mouse pads, pens, bookmarks, letter openers, and stickers) and imprinted with the IE logo and local IE contact information These are usually incorporated into the NEO handbook or handed out to participants

What are helpful source materials, and where can I find them?
 	
(Note- these links are for the inTRAnet. If you are accessing the files from outside VA the URL begins www.ethics.va.gov)**
	• "IntegratedEthics: Improving Ethics Quality in Health Care" (video), 10 minutes
	
	• "IntegratedEthics: Closing the Gap - Overview Presentation," the Ethics Center's IE introductory PowerPoint presentation
	
	• IntegratedEthics Toolkit*
	
	• Primers* (especially the IE Council organizational chart on p. 9 of all primers)
	
	  » *Ethics Consultation: Responding to Ethics Questions in Health Care*
	
	  » *Preventive Ethics: Addressing Ethics Quality Gaps on a Systems Level*
	
	  » *Ethical Leadership: Fostering an Ethical Environment & Culture*
	
	• IE flyer template**
	
	• "Ethical Leadership: Fostering an Ethical Environment & Culture"* (video, 44 minutes)

How should IE content be integrated with that of CBI and OGE?	• IE presentation can directly follow the CBI presentation to show how they fit together. • Information on National Compliance and Ethics Week (held every year during the first week of May), a joint CBI-IE effort, can be shared, http://vaww.cbi.va.gov/ceweek.asp** • IE and OGE materials, such as the video, "Ethics Most Wanted," can be presented during the same period. • At some facilities, ethics-related handouts also include OGE information, such as the Fourteen Principles of Ethical Conduct for Federal Employees

*These materials are available from the Ethics Center's Intranet, http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/integratedethics/ieresources.asp. IE educational modules are also available through the LMS system at https://www.lms.va.gov/plateau/user/login.jsp

** Not available on the internet

Looking for . . .

National Ethics Committee reports?
http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/nec/index.asp

National Ethics Teleconference call summaries?
http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/pubs/netsum.asp

National Ethics Teleconference call schedule?
http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/activities/net.asp

Ethics-related pandemic influenza material?
http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/activities/pandemic_influenza_preparedness.asp

VHA Health Care Ethics policies?
http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/activities/policy.asp

National Center for
ETHICS
in Health Care

How to get new employees talking about ethics. . .
Suggested conversation starters for your NEO

Presenters have used ethics questions similar to these to spur the interest and attention of new employees at the orientation:

- What if a patient refuses medical care?

- What should you do if you identify repeated and inaccurate reporting of performance measure information?

- What should you do if you feel pressured to "fudge the numbers"?

- What if you see something in the workplace that your gut tells you is just plain wrong?

- What should you do if a coworker is worried about an outpatient and is driving to the patient's home to check in on him after work?

- What help is there for patients who have trouble making health care decisions?

- What if there is a conflict between medical care being recommended and the patient's religious beliefs or morals?

- If a patient in ICU or Palliative Care asked you to pray with them, how would you handle this request?

- What if there is a conflict within the patient's family about how medical care is given?

- You are a supervisor and a close personal friend applies to a position that reports directly to you. HR has certified the person as qualified for the position. What should you do?

For more ideas on introducing new employees to ethics, see the online learning module, "Ethics in Health Care," which can be accessed at **http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/integratedethics/onlinemodacc.asp**

Looking for . . .

*Ethics Rx***?**
http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/pubs/ethicsrx.asp

*IN fOCUS***?**
http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/pubs/infocus.asp

IntegratedEthics

Improving Ethics Quality in Health Care

Developed by the IntegratedEthics team at the National Center for Ethics in Health Care, IntegratedEthics *in Action* is published on the IE website vaww.ethics.va.gov/integratedethics/IEaction.asp, listserv, and via other IE venues. Its purpose is to rapidly disseminate promising practices and feature emerging IE champions to help facilities and VISNs in their implementation of the IE initiative. We welcome your comments and suggestions for topics to: vhaethics@edc.org.