

Instructions for the Preventive Ethics Coordinator

Your Role and Responsibilities

The aim of preventive ethics in health care is to produce measurable improvements in ethics practices by implementing systems-level changes to reduce gaps in ethics quality. As coordinator of the preventive ethics function in your facility, your role is to lead efforts to improve health care quality by identifying, prioritizing, and addressing ethical issues on a systems level. 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 preventive ethics, but also management skills.

Broadly, your responsibilities require you to:

1. Demonstrate expertise in the IntegratedEthics approach to preventive ethics

This Preventive Ethics Toolkit contains everything you need to ensure that you're up to speed: an overview of IntegratedEthics; descriptions of your role and responsibilities as coordinator of the preventive ethics 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 preventive ethics video course. The toolkit also provides communications materials and information about online learning modules on ethics in health care.

2. Manage your facility's preventive ethics team

As Preventive Ethics Coordinator you're responsible for overseeing your facility's preventive ethics function. This includes selecting members for the preventive ethics team, organizing the function, and ensuring that it has needed resources. You'll ensure that team members are appropriately trained in the IntegratedEthics approach to preventive ethics and implement it effectively. It's your job to see that team members collaborate and work well together.

Your responsibilities also include ensuring the quality of preventive ethics, using the resources provided in the primer, this toolkit, and other IntegratedEthics tools to evaluate the function, and overseeing ongoing quality improvement.

3. Ensure integration

The preventive ethics 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 help you to identify issues for the preventive ethics team to address or to address issues that others have identified.

4. Build visibility and support for preventive ethics

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

	Mo 1	Mo 2	Mo 3	Mo 4	Mo 5	Mo 6	Mo 7	Mo 8	Mo 9	Mo 10	Mo 11	Mo 12
Preventive Ethics Coordinator												
<i>Educate Yourself</i>												
Read PE toolkit and review primer (M 1)												
Complete PE video course (M 1)												
<i>Engage with the National IE Community</i>												
Register with the national IntegratedEthics website (M 1)												
Participate in IE teleconferences (M 3 thru 12)												
<i>Understand Your Current Ethics Program</i>												
Contribute to completion of IE Facility Workbook (M 2 & 3)												
Review IE Staff Survey results (M 9 thru 12)												
<i>Organize the PE Function</i>												
Organize the PE function (M 2 thru 4)												
Identify members of PE function (M 3 & 4)												
Draft a PE policy (M 12)												
<i>Educate PE Team</i>												
Distribute IE communications materials (M 4)												
Distribute PE primer (M 4)												
Schedule and organize PE video course (M 5)												
Discuss PE results from IE Facility Workbook (M 4 & 5)												
<i>Use the ISSUES Approach</i>												
Establish and maintain PE contacts (M 5 thru 12)												
Assemble list of issues (M 6)												
Begin your first ISSUES cycle (M 7 & 8)												
Continuously improve your PE process (M 7 thru 12)												

Description of Tasks

Educate Yourself

Read PE 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 preventive ethics primer, *Preventive Ethics: Addressing Ethics Quality Gaps on a Systems Level*, 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 preventive ethics function in your facility.

Complete PE video course. Once you've reviewed the preventive ethics primer and have an understanding of preventive ethics, you'll benefit from the preventive ethics video course. The course walks you through key steps in the ISSUES cycle, using a case example.

Engage with the National IE Community

Register with 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 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 facility workbook is completed but may need your help collecting data. Specifically, you may be asked to assemble a team to complete the preventive ethics section of the workbook. You'll also review the results from the preventive ethics section and plan next steps to enhance preventive ethics in your facility.

Review IE Staff Survey results. The IntegratedEthics Council will compile information about the gaps in ethics quality that were identified through the IntegratedEthics Staff Survey. Your job, in collaboration with the council, is to prioritize the issues and concerns identified and target quality improvement initiatives to address them through the preventive ethics function.

Organize the PE Function

Organize the PE function. Once you have a handle on the principles and practice of preventive ethics it's time to think about how you'll organize preventive ethics in your facility—for example, you might integrate preventive ethics into the operations of existing services or programs, such as quality management. The preventive ethics primer lays out some possibilities for you to consider. Your decision should hinge on what you think will be the most successful approach, given the unique context of your facility.

Identify members of PE function. Hand in hand with organizing the preventive ethics function is recruiting members for your preventive ethics team. The preventive ethics function is only as effective as the membership of your team. With the assistance of the IntegratedEthics Program Officer, recruit team members carefully, referring to the primer for guidance. Ideally, your team will include staff who have expertise in ethics and quality improvement and a representative from facility administration.

Draft a PE policy. The structure, function, and process of preventive ethics should be formalized in institutional policy. Your IntegratedEthics Council will develop overall policy for IntegratedEthics in your facility; you'll work with your IntegratedEthics Program Officer to draft the section governing preventive ethics. 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 council to release the final IntegratedEthics policy to begin implementing preventive ethics! The team should begin implementing ISSUES cycles as soon as the members have read the primer and taken the video course, as described below.

Educate PE Team

Distribute IE communications materials. Ensure that members 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 PE primer. The success of preventive ethics hinges on a well-informed, committed team. At this point, it's time to begin building the expertise of the Preventive Ethics Team. Team members should carefully review the preventive ethics primer, *Preventive Ethics: Addressing Ethics Quality Gaps on a Systems Level*.

Schedule and organize PE video course. The preventive ethics video course is an excellent vehicle to promote team building and teach the members of your team about preventive ethics and the ISSUES approach. See the training checklist for details. Keep track of who completed the course and when; follow facility procedures to ensure that team members receive education credits for completing the course.

Discuss PE results from IE Facility Workbook. Discussing the preventive ethics section of the facility workbook will help you and your team to assess the degree to which your facility is already undertaking preventive ethics activities, where in the organization this may be occurring, who is responsible, and what processes are applied. The workbook will also help you to recognize what next steps you may take to initiate or enhance preventive ethics in your facility.

Use the ISSUES Approach

Establish and maintain PE contacts. To be effective, your team must build and maintain strong relationships with key individuals, offices, and programs in the facility. Such contacts will help you in a variety of ways, for example, by alerting you to potential ethics issues that need to be addressed. You'll wish to review the goals and objectives of the preventive ethics team with these individuals and help them understand how the preventive ethics approach can help them to improve ethics quality. Key contacts include the Ethics Consultation Coordinator and IntegratedEthics Program Officer, senior leaders, service and program heads, and quality management staff.

Assemble list of issues. Based on data collected from key contacts, the IntegratedEthics Staff Survey, accreditation reviews, satisfaction surveys, etc., your team should develop a list of issues that may be appropriate for the ISSUES approach.

Begin your first ISSUES cycle. After your team has compiled a list of issues that are appropriate for preventive ethics and clarified and prioritized the improvement goals, you are ready to select an issue and begin your first ISSUES cycle. Remember to refer to the preventive ethics primer as you proceed to ensure that you address all the steps in the process. Begin additional cycles at your own pace. Experienced preventive ethics teams often work on several ethics issues simultaneously.

Continuously improve your PE process. As you complete each ISSUES cycle, be sure to critically examine your process so that you can continuously improve.

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 (www.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.