

Clinical Ethics Consultation

Facing Difficult Choices

Patients, families, staff, doctors, leaders and trainees make up the health care team. Health care teams make ethical decisions every day in caring for patients. Typical ethical questions include:

- **What** should we do? (What actions are good or right?)
- **Why** should we do it? (Exploring the reasons for our decisions.)
- **How** should the decision be made, and **who** should make it?

Some situations are more complex and require difficult decisions where there are no clear answers. In such cases, teams may contact the Clinical Ethics Consultation Service for support. **Any** member of the health care team, including patients and families, may contact the Clinical Ethics Consultation Service for support.

When should I contact the Clinical Ethics Consultation Service?

Common situations where Ethics Consultants can help, include:

- disagreements regarding the goals of care for a patient
- uncertainty about how to make decisions for a patient who lacks capacity to make his/her own decisions
- doubt regarding which particular treatments or options are best for patients

NOTE: Ethical questions or concerns about complex or challenging **discharge plans for patients**, can also be addressed by staff from the Office of Community Connections and Transitions. They can be reached at **905-521-2100, ext. 42041** or by email at: dischargespecialists@hhsc.ca . For more information see: <http://corpweb.hhsc.ca/body.cfm?id=196>

What is involved in an Ethics Consultation?

Ethics Consultants do not make decisions for others, but they do assist the process of making ethical decisions by:

making clear the patient's goals, values, wishes and best interests

discussing the facts of the situation with everyone involved to make sure that the issues, choices and likely outcomes are clearly understood

exploring ethical values, principles, norms, policies, standards and resources

mediating and resolving conflicts between parties

providing retrospective debriefing of difficult cases

Consultations can consist of a simple phone call or a series of meetings, depending on the complexity of the situation. Ethics Consultants respect the privacy of everyone involved, within legal limits.

How do I access the Clinical Ethics Consultation Service?

Call **905-521-2100, ext. 76443**, and ask to page the Ethics Consultant on call. Leave your name and the phone number. An Ethics Consultant will call you back shortly. Ethics Consultation is available Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

More information is available at: www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/ethics or by calling the Office of Ethics at ext.73661 or email: officeofethics@hhsc.ca