

## Evergreen Nursing Services Ethics Framework

### A. Overview

Ethics is about making “right” and “good” choices and the reasons given for the choices and actions we make and take. In a health care context, ethics promotes reflective practice in the delivery of services. Ethics addresses the question “What should we do and why?” :

- Deciding what we should do – what decisions are morally right or acceptable;
- Explaining why we should do it – justifying our decision using language and values and principles; and
- Describing how we should do it – outlining an appropriate process for enacting the decision.

### B. Ethics Framework for Decision Making

#### 1. *Define the Issues and Stakeholders*

- Capture the problem in ethical terms - what type of ethical issue is it?
  - Ethical Violation: when an action that appears to be unethical is being proposed or carried out (e.g., a patient is being given a treatment without providing valid consent).
  - Ethical Dilemma: When there are competing courses of action both of which may be ethically defensible (e.g., conflicting values) and there is a difference of opinion as to how to proceed.
  - Ethical Uncertainty: when it is unclear what ethical principles are at play or whether or not the situation represents an ethical problem.
  - Ethical (Moral) Distress): When you find yourself in a situation of discomfort, if you have failed to live up to your own ethical expectations, or you are unable to carry out what you believe is the right course of action due to organizational or other constraints.
- Determine the relevant stakeholders: patient, resident, family, care providers, and health care team members

## 2. Gather and Clarify the Facts

- The “Four Boxes” ethical grid is a useful tool in gathering and clarifying facts:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Medical Indications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>History, Diagnosis, Prognosis</li> <li>Available treatments and expected outcomes</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Patient/Client Preferences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the patient/client have the capacity to understand and make decisions?</li> <li>Is there an appropriate substitute decision maker?</li> <li>What are the patient/clients values, goals, and preferences?</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Quality of Life</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What was the patient/clients quality of life before illness?</li> <li>What are the prospects for quality of life with various options and courses of action?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Contextual Factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there religious, cultural, and family issues to consider?</li> <li>Are there legal, financial, and resource considerations?</li> <li>Is this a case that involves research or teaching?</li> </ul>

*The “Four Boxes” is a tool derived by Jonsen, Siegler, and Winslade. In: Jonsen AR, Siegler M, Winslade WJ. Clinical Ethics: A Practical Approach to Ethical Decisions in Clinical Medicine. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Medical, 2010.*

## 3. Ethical Analysis

An ethical analysis of an issue should be undertaken:

- In view of our Mission, Vision and Values.
- In light of established bioethical principles such as: respecting a person’s dignity and freedom, preventing harm, enhancing wellness, telling the truth, preserving confidentiality, and promoting justice/fairness.

## 4. Make, Implement and evaluate the Decision

- What are the options available, and what are the pros and cons of each option, including the option of doing nothing?
- What option best advances the goals and values of the patient or client and their family, and is consistent with Evergreen Nursing Services’ mission, vision and values and shared ethical principles?
- Are there contingency plans in case the decision has unintended outcomes?
- Once a decision has been reached decide on its implementation.
- Evaluate the decision after its implementation.

## Appendix A

### ETHICS WORKSHEET

Date:

<b>STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE FACTS</b>
What is the presenting ethical issue(s)?
What are the relevant medical or other indications?
What are the patient(s) preferences? (if applicable)
What is the evidence?
What are the contextual features?
<b>What is the ethical issue?</b>
<b>STEP 2: DETERMINE THE RELEVANT ETHICAL PRINCIPLES</b>

<p>Who are the stakeholders (relevant parties)?</p>	<p>What values/principles does each believe are relevant to the issue?</p>	<p>Which values/principles do stakeholders agree are most important in the context? (rate from 1 to ....)</p>
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Are there any other factors that need to be considered?

Have perspectives of relevant individuals been sought?

**STEP 3: EXPLORE THE OPTIONS**

Option 1:	Option 2:	Option: 3
<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent with laws and policies <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent with mission, visions, values and strategic direction	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent with laws and policies <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent with mission, visions, values and strategic direction	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent with laws and policies <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent with mission, visions, values and strategic direction
Benefits/Strengths:	Benefits/Strengths:	Benefits/Strengths:
Harms/Limitations:	Harms/Limitations:	Harms/Limitations:

Additional resources Used:	Additional resources Used:	Additional resources Used:
<b>What is the most ethically justifiable option?</b>		
<b>STEP 4: ACT</b>		
Documentation/Communication of Decision (who, what, where, how):		
Implementation Plan:		
Evaluation Plan:		
Reviewed By: _____		
<b>Are we (am I) comfortable with this decision?</b>		