

When should I contact the ethicist?

You may contact the Ethicist to request any of the activities listed in the section “What is the ethicist’s role?” Anyone (hospital staff, physicians, students, volunteers, patients and family members) may request an ethics consultation.

An ethics consultation may be helpful if you are facing or have experienced any of the following situations and you are unsure of how to proceed:

- **Ethical Violation** – when an action that appears to be unethical is being proposed or carried out
- **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 if you are unable to carry out what you believe is the right course of action due to organizational or other constraints

How do I contact the Ethicist?

You can contact the Ethicist, in confidence, by e-mail or phone at:

E-mail: ethics@cvh.on.ca

Phone: 905-813-1100, ext. 4482.

More information about the Ethics Program is available on the CVH Intranet: Education > Ethics.



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Ethics Program Information for Staff, Physicians, Volunteers & Students



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What is Ethics?

Ethics is about making right or good choices and the reasons that we give for our choices and actions. Ethics promotes reflective practice in the delivery of health care.

“Ethics can be described as a way of critically looking at issues in health care that encompasses:

- *Deciding what we should do* – what decisions are morally right or acceptable based on the values and principles we agree are relevant;
- *Explaining why we should do it* – justifying our decision using language of values and principles to explain why; and
- *Describing how we should do it* – outlining an appropriate process of enacting the decision.”

Definition developed by Dr. Barbara Secker, University of Toronto Joint Center for Bioethics

If you answer ‘yes’ to one or more of the following questions you may be facing an ethical issue:

- Am I trying to determine the right course of action?
- Am I asking a ‘should’ question?
- Are values and beliefs involved?
- Am I feeling uncomfortable?

Everyone has a role to play in ensuring the ethical delivery of care, from bedside to boardroom. The Credit Valley Hospital is committed to providing quality compassionate care to the community it serves. Ethical principles and values are incorporated into the way that decisions are made and care is delivered every day. The Credit Valley Hospital has an active Ethics Forum which provides leadership in areas of ethics education, policy development and review, and consultation. The Ethics Forum is comprised of hospital staff and physicians, representatives from the Board of Governors and community, and an Ethicist.

IDEA: Ethical Decision-making Framework

The purpose of the IDEA Framework is to provide a step-by-step process to help guide healthcare providers in working through ethical issues.

I – Identify the facts (medical indications, patient preferences, contextual features);
Ask: What is the ethical issue(s)?

D – Determine the relevant ethical principles (e.g. nature & scope, relative weights);

Ask: Have perspectives of relevant individuals been sought?

E – Explore the options (harms & benefits, strengths & limitations, laws & policies, mission, vision, values);

Ask: What is the most ethically justifiable option?

A – Act (recommend, implement, evaluate)
Ask: Are we (am I) comfortable with this decision?

The first step in the evolution of ethics is a sense of solidarity with other human beings.

Albert Schweitzer



What is the Ethicist’s role?

The overarching role of the Ethicist is to facilitate and support ethical decision-making throughout the organization through the identification, analysis, and resolution of ethical issues.

This includes:

- Providing education on ethics-related topics;
- Reviewing, developing, implementing, and evaluating ethics-related policies;
- Participating on relevant hospital committees and working groups; and
- Conducting ethics consultations

What is the Ethics Facilitator’s role?

Credit Valley Hospital has a number of Ethics Facilitators representing different program areas and areas of professional practice within the organization. Ethics Facilitators are members of the Ethics Forum and have completed a series of ethics education modules. Their role is to:

- Model ethics awareness, imagination, and analysis in deliberation and decision-making around patient care in their area of practice;
- Act as first point of contact for ethics concerns in their area of practice;
- Help Ethicist organize ethics rounds/in-services to address pressing ethical issues; and
- Continue to develop ethics knowledge and skills through participation in Ethics Forum and other educational opportunities.