

Ethics Committee Basics

Leading Age Maryland

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Ethics Committees

Key Considerations

Functions

Membership

Documentation



THREE FUNCTIONS OF AN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Education

For Committee Members, Staff and Community

Policy Development and Review (Advisory Only)

DNR Orders, Futility, Sexuality, Confidentiality,
Dual Relationships, Disclosing Errors
Allocation of Scarce Resources

Case Consultation (Advisory Only)

PEG Procedures, End Of Life Decisions, Truthfulness,
Borderline Capacity, Sterilization, Dietary Concerns,
Research Issues, Physical and Chemical Restraints

MEMBERSHIP OF AN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Breadth

Across Disciplines and Demographics
(Community Representatives?)

Depth

Throughout the Organizational Chart

Rotation

Continuity and Vitality

Expertise

Consultants

THE ROLE OF ETHICS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PERSPECTIVE NOT REPRESENTATION

CONTRIBUTION NOT CONSTITUENCY

DOCUMENTATION OF ETHICS WORK

INITIATION

Who Can Request Work?

CONTENT

Formal Reports

RATIFICATION

Do We Vote?

FILING

Where Does It Go?



The Ethics Consult

Common Sources of Moral Tension

Disagreement

Provider-Recipient, Provider-Provider,
Patient-Family, Family-Family

Confusion

Competing Intuitions, Lack of Intuition Altogether

Lack of Support

Responsibility and Liability

Common Sources of Moral Confusion

Ethical vs. Legal

What if I can get sued for doing what is right?

Ethical vs. Clinical

Do people have the right to make bad choices?

Professional Ethics vs. Personal Ethics

What if your choice bothers me?

Common Signs of Ethical Issues

Fairness

How should we distribute advantages and disadvantages across individuals?

Autonomy

Must I always respect the voluntary choices of others?

Personal Integrity

How should I respond when I am profoundly uncomfortable with a situation or demand?

Common Barriers to Ethics Consults

Time and Workload

How much effort will this take?
Will a consult help with efficiency?

Process

Does the policy require ID team or
Attending Physician approval?

Discomfort

No one enjoys contemplating
their own moral fallibility.

The Ethics Consult

Results

Clarification of the issue

Identification of operative values

Specific Recommendations
(multiple options might be acceptable)

Justification for recommendations

Reference to additional sources of assistance

