

Values-Based Decision-Making Toolkit

Ethics Decision-  
Making Process

Making good decisions

The following decision-making process can help you make sure appropriate questions are being asked and steps are being taken to address an ethical issue:

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| 1 | Clarify the key question | * Identify the central issue needing to be addressed |
| 2 | Identify  facts & stakeholders | * Collect relevant facts and identify what you need but don't have * If it is a clinical issue, collect information about the medical diagnosis or prognosis, quality of life described in patient’s terms, patient’s preferences and contextual features * Are there any organizational policies or guidelines addressing the question? * What guidance do relevant laws give? * Which individuals are relevant to this issue and who should be part of the discussion and decision? |
| 3 | Identify values and prioritize | * What are the key values? * What is the central conflict in values? * How do you prioritize these values against each other? * What do you think is most important and why? |
| 4 | Identify options | * Identify all potential courses of action, even ones that don't immediately appear suitable |
| 5 | Make a decision  & evaluate | * Assess each option against the values that you determined to be of priority in step 3 above * Make a decision consistent with identified key values * Once the decision is made, follow up and evaluate so you can learn from this for next time |

Questions

1. What question are we trying to answer?

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| The **Key Question**, that if answered will provide the team appropriate direction for how to move forward… |
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2. Identify the facts

Collect the relevant facts and identify anything missing that is critical to the decision.

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| What we know for sure: about the patient/client/resident’s identity, what is important to them, and their understanding of the context | |
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| What we know for sure: about the person’s medical condition, treatment options, etc. | |
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| What we know for sure: about the person’s sources of funding/ resources/supports, where they live, what services/options are accessible | |
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| What we know for sure: about the family, friends, and support people | |
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| What we know for sure: about the other care providers, who is involved and what their perspectives are | |
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| What we know for sure: about the system, who else is affected, any clear guidance from relevant policies or laws, etc. | |
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| What we don’t know but can find out | Who is responsible for getting this information? |
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3. What are the key underlying values?

* Brainstorm what are important values that the decision should live up to (see Appendix for some examples)
* To be successful in this step requires a shared and clear agreement on the meanings of the values (and what living up to them would look like in real life)
* If there are values that can’t be lived up to (because some are in tension/conflict/disagreement with others), prioritize them, then discuss your justifications for this

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| **Tip:** avoid one-word values, these are open to different interpretations. Instead of “autonomy” say what you mean in detail such as “it is important to support the patient to have final say over which available treatment option they prefer” |

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| Values List | How important are these relative to each other? |
| However we answer the question,  it’s important that… | Priority:  5 = *Crucial* 3 = Very *important* 1 = *Important* |
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4. Identify the options - what are some possible answers to the key question?

Possible Options

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| Option A | Option B | Option C |
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Ethics Analysis: How well does each option allow us to live UP to relevant values?

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| Possible ways of answering the question identified above include: | | Option A  *Enter answer from above table…* | Option B  *Enter answer from above table…* | Option C  *Enter answer from above table…* |
| How well does this allow us to: | *Prioritized Value #1* |  |  |  |
| *Prioritized Value #2* |  |  |  |
| *Prioritized Value #3* |  |  |  |
| *Prioritized Value #4* |  |  |  |
| *Prioritized Value #5* |  |  |  |

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| Notes (if applicable) | | |
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5. Summary of decision or recommendations

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| Our recommendation/decision |  | |
| Our rationale for this decision/ recommendation is… |  | |
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next steps

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| **Action that needs to be taken** | **Who will be accountable for doing this** | **Time line for action** | **How will outcomes be communicated back to decision team** |
| *Implementing the decision* |  |  |  |
| *Communication - letting others know* |  |  |  |
| *Reconvene to ensure decision having intended impacts* |  |  |  |

NECESSARY PARTNERSHIPs

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| **People we should be working with** | **Contact Info** | **Who will be in touch with them?** | **Key questions or messages for the partner** | **How will outcomes be communicated to the decision team?** |
| *Professionals from other teams or services* |  |  |  |  |
| *Loved ones or family members the patient would be comfortable including in the conversation* |  |  |  |  |

