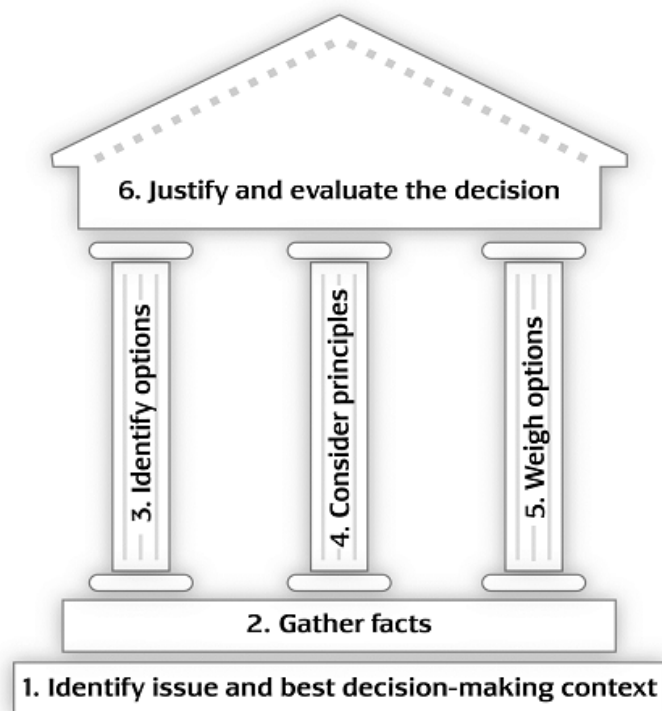


# Clinical Ethics Consultation Service

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**“Guiding you through tough decisions.”**

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## What is clinical ethics?

Ethics is about reflecting on our values and making decisions that are values-based.

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 we do it? (What plan is most ethical?)

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

However, when teams face difficult choices or conflict arises, the Clinical Ethics Consultation Service provides a process to help. This process allows the team to consider their personal and professional values, and to reflect on what is best for patients.

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 Services?

If you find yourself struggling with a difficult ethical decision, or wondering what is the right thing to do in a complex patient care situation, think about contacting the Clinical Ethics Consultation Service. An Ethics Consultant will speak with you to find out your needs, and may offer:

- education and guidance
  - referrals
  - facilitation of team discussions
  - conflict resolution support, also called mediation
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Ethics Consultants **do not** have the authority to make medical decisions, but they do support those facing difficult moral choices in patient care.

Common situations where Ethics Consultants can help, include:

- disagreements regarding the plan of care or goals of treatment for a patient
- uncertainty about how to make decisions for a patient who lacks capacity to make his/her own decisions
- conflict regarding what treatments are best for patients

If you are not sure if the Clinical Ethics Consultation Service can help in your situation, please page us and we will discuss your situation and if necessary connect you to the right service.

## **What is involved in a Clinical Ethics Consultation?**

Ethics Consultants assist the process of making ethical decisions by:

- ✓ discussing the facts of the situation with everyone involved to make sure that the issues, choices, goals, and likely outcomes are clearly understood
- ✓ exploring ethical values, principles, norms, policies, standards and resources
- ✓ making clear the patient's goals, values, wishes and best interests
- ✓ mediating and resolving conflicts between parties
- ✓ helping the health care team agree on the right course of action

Ethics Consultants will respect your privacy within legal limits.

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## Who provides Clinical Ethics Consultations?

Ethics Consultation is provided by a team of health care professionals at Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS). All Ethics Consultants are trained in clinical ethics as well as mediation and communication skills. The team is led by the hospital's Clinical and Organizational Ethicist, and reports to the Clinical Ethics Committee.

## How do I access the Clinical Ethics Consultation Service?

You may contact the Clinical Ethics Consultation Service through the HHS paging office. Call 905-521-2100 (or ext. 76443 if you are calling from within the hospital) and ask to page the Ethics Consultation Service. Leave your name and the phone number at which you may be reached. An Ethics Consultant will call you back within an hour to discuss the situation with you.

Clinical Ethics Consultation is available Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. After hours leave a message with the Clinical & Organizational Ethicist at ext. 73446 and an Ethics Consultant will get back to you the next day.

## Resources

For more information visit our websites:

For staff: (HHS Intranet) <http://corpweb/clinicaethics>

For patients and families: [www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/clinicaethics](http://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/clinicaethics)

## Notes:

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