

VHA Home HealthCare

General Policies and Procedures

Policy Name	Code of Ethical Conduct
Policy #	B.20.0
Authorized By:	Senior Management Group

Overview

The purpose of the Code of Ethical Conduct (Code) is to provide a set of ethical principles to be used as a guide for the people of VHA Home HealthCare (VHA) and its day-to-day operations. The Code complements laws and regulations, as well as standards of professional practice. By using an umbrella approach, the Code supplements VHA’s other policies and procedures by providing over-arching guidance to ensure that behavior and activities are always conducted in a sound and ethical manner.

Under no circumstances should ethical conduct be compromised in the pursuit of VHA’s business objectives or the personal objective of any VHA Personnel.

In the event of an ethical dilemma, (e.g., a conflict applying the principles in practice) the I-D-E-A¹ decision making framework is to be used to resolve the issue. The I-D-E-A framework can be completed individually, with assistance from peers/ supervisors/ stakeholders and/or through support provided by the VHA Ethics Committee. See Appendix A for more details on the IDEA framework.

Policy

This Code applies to all VHA employees, independent contractors, service providers, agents, board members, community support volunteers, and students (together, VHA Personnel).

VHA Personnel must always adhere to VHA’s ethical principles when performing VHA work or representing VHA.

Specifically, at all times, VHA Personnel shall conduct themselves in a way that upholds the following ethical principles and exemplifies their values:

¹ I – identify the facts, D- determine the ethical principles in conflict, E – explore options, A – act on decisions made and evaluate

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Principles:

INTEGRITY

- Provide the highest quality services that will benefit VHA clients within available resources
- Continually strive to improve services
- Ensure to have and maintain competence in the skills required to successfully perform your work
- Act as a reliable and supportive team member for your VHA colleagues
- Be honest with yourself, your clients and your colleagues

DIGNITY

- Assist and empower clients to make informed decisions about their health, care/service plan and available options in keeping with the client's values, beliefs and health care goals
- Always uphold the Client Bill of Rights and make certain that clients are fully informed of their rights and how to engage them
- Avoid any action that might discredit you or VHA or that could diminish the trust one has in you personally or in VHA as an organization
- Do not involve clients with personal or work-related issues facing VHA Personnel

RESPECT

- Always demonstrate respect for human dignity
- Honour the intrinsic worth of another person
- Treat others with respect by ensuring their physical, psychological and emotional well-being and refrain from any form of unnecessary harm, including physical, psychological or emotional harm
- Treat all members of the VHA community in a manner that facilitates openness and trust in interactions
- Fulfill your responsibilities with kindness, sensitivity, and thoughtfulness

SENSITIVITY TO DIVERSITY

- Ensure that VHA services are based on clients' needs, regardless of their age, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, income, grounds protected under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and/or any other factors of a diverse lifestyle.
- Use a holistic approach to clients' health and support needs by acknowledging all things important to them in their life, chosen families and communities

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- Be responsive and sensitive to the diversity among our clients and fellow VHA Personnel
- Do not impose personal values and/or belief systems on clients or fellow VHA Personnel
- Foster environments where clients and colleagues feel empowered to voice concerns and freely propose ideas
- Embrace and welcome differences

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Comply with applicable laws, regulatory practice standards, and professional codes of conduct as defined by legislature, applicable governing colleges, associations, and institutes
- Promote excellence in your activities and interactions
- Never treat or provide care to a family member or friend as part of your service provision on behalf of VHA
 - Note: treating family members or friends is not permitted by any of the regulated professional colleges unless there is no other choice, e.g., due to lack of healthcare resources in the area
- Never compromise services to VHA clients for personal benefit
- Always declare any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest pursuant to VHA policy
- Do not seek or reap financial or other personal gain (for self or related others) from a client
- Always take necessary measures to ensure and encourage the safety and well-being of clients and fellow VHA Personnel
- Report any improper conduct or unsafe practice committed by another VHA Personnel as soon as possible so the situation can be investigated and addressed. Different situations may have different reporting procedures set by VHA policy. When in doubt, report your concern to your team supervisor or manager who will engage the necessary procedure.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Take the time to explain and speak in a way that the client can clearly and fully understand. Repeat, rephrase and confirm as needed. Where necessary, engage VHA’s translation services to ensure comprehension.
- Ask questions and be an active listener. Let clients know you want to partner with them on their journey not push them to achieve desired outcomes.
- Provide updates regularly and whenever there are changes so that information remains accurate and up to date, including appropriate documentation.
- Advocate on behalf of clients and, where applicable, fellow VHA Personnel and the community to improve awareness of issues affecting our clients and colleagues, such as, improved accessibility to and quality of services

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- Report any client or VHA Personnel safety concerns, identifying potential risks. Such reports can be made to the VHA office during regular hours or to the manager on-call if it is after-hours.
- Always maintain professional boundaries with clients and colleagues
- use electronic communication devices appropriately while on duty and whenever using the VHA network
- Work with community partners in a spirit of collaboration to maximize the effectiveness of client services, while recognizing the competitive element of the home care sector

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Ensure that client and VHA confidential information (e.g., personal health information) remains confidential and secure
- Confirm that clients are providing informed consent when agreeing to have their private information shared and understand that they can withdraw or limit their consent at any time

Breach of the Code of Ethical Conduct

Every individual at VHA is encouraged to raise concerns whenever they arise.

Any known or suspected violation of the Code must be promptly reported to a supervisor/manager or to the Ethics Committee (ethics@vha.ca).

All alleged breaches of the Code will be investigated using the appropriate policy and procedure based on the nature of the violation and the individuals involved.

VHA Personnel found to be in breach of the Code may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Resources

- Community Ethics Network (CEN) Ethical Decision Making Toolkit, I-D-E-A framework
- Publications of the Ethics Working Group for the Community Health and Support Sector, Toronto
- College of Nurses of Ontario Practice Standard, Ethics; *Community Care Connection* Fall 2003, Issue 5; 2007 CCAC Provincial Template
- Professional College Standards related to Codes of Ethics for Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech Language Pathology, Social Work, & Dietetics.

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Related Policies

Vision, Mission Core Beliefs

[Valuing Diversity Equity and Inclusion](#)

[Inclusive Work Environment \(Anti-Harassment Policy\)](#)

[Anti-Oppression and Anti Discrimination](#)

[Person and Family Centred Care](#)

[Consents, Service, Privacy and Others](#)

[Reporting Requirements](#)

[Accessibility](#)

Client Rights and Responsibilities

Personal Information Privacy

Confidentiality, Non-Solicitation and Conflict of Interest

Client Safety Incident Management

Client Complaint Management

Recognizing and Reporting Abuse

Prohibition against Client Abuse or Maltreatment

Allegations by Clients

Debriefing Critical Incidents

Client Premises and Prohibition on Gifts

Privacy Breach

Workplace Violence

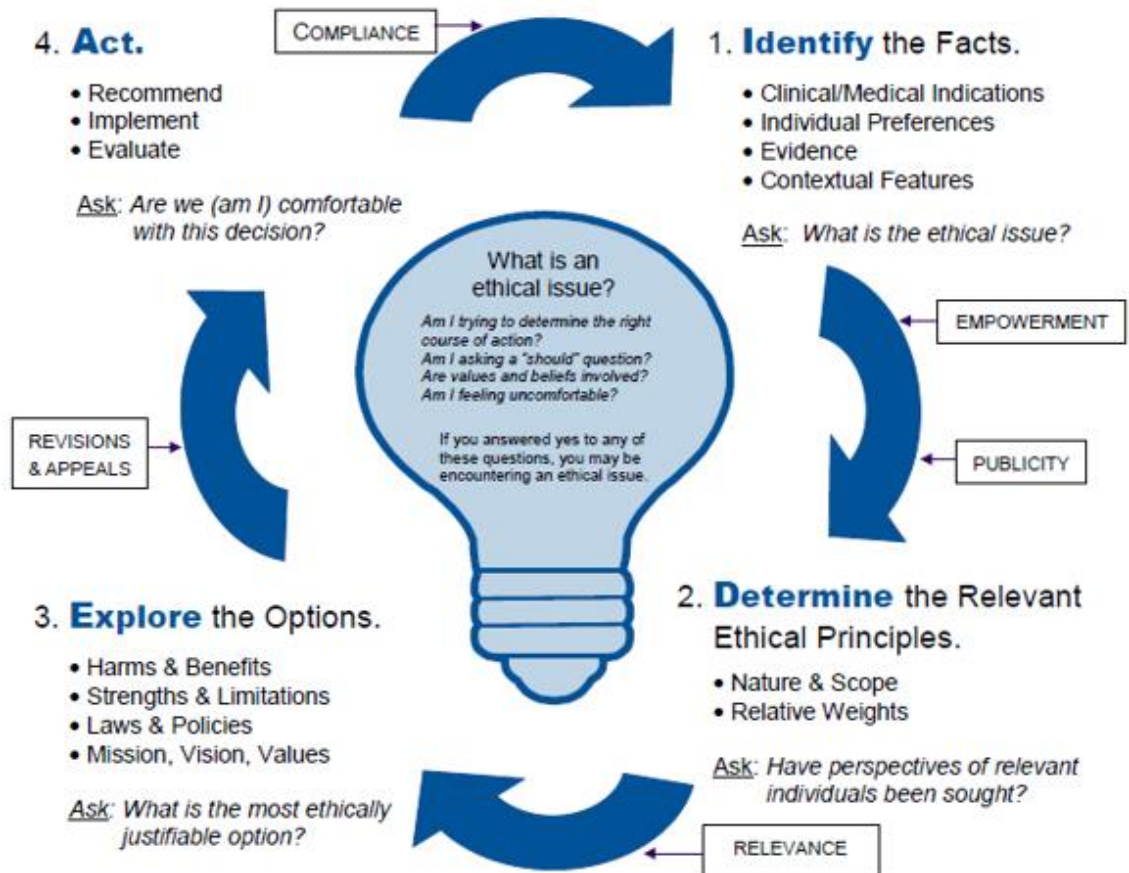
Whistle blower

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APPENDIX

IDEA:

Ethical Decision-Making Framework



The IDEA: Ethical Decision-Making Framework builds upon the Toronto Central Community Care Access Centre *Community Ethics Toolkit* (2008), which was based on the work of Jonsen, Seigler, & Winslade (2002); the work of the Core Curriculum Working Group at the University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics; and incorporates aspects of the accountability for reasonableness framework developed by Daniels and Sabin (2002) and adapted by Gibson, Martin, & Singer (2005).

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