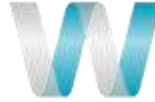




BC WOMEN'S  
HOSPITAL+  
HEALTH CENTRE



## Ethics Framework

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## **Building a Culture of Ethics**

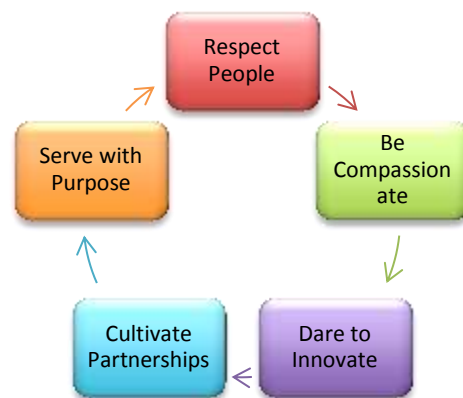
Ethics is about determining what is right or what should be done in the face of uncertainty or conflict about values. BCCH/SHH and BCWH&HC is committed to supporting an ethical culture and promoting reflective practice in the delivery of health care.

Determining what should be done can sometimes be challenging. While there may not always be one right choice, there will be better choices than others. Ethics-informed processes and analyses can contribute to determining what these better choices may be, and establish a basis upon which to make and explain decisions.

## **Living our Values**

Ethics is also about thinking critically about how we act and make decisions on a daily basis, including how our values inform our behaviour. Our values define what we believe in and what we stand for as an organization. We use our values to inform our work, our decisions and our behaviour. Everyone at BCCH/SHH and BCWH&HC has a role to play in ensuring the ethical delivery and management of care, from bedside to boardroom. This includes decisions made and actions taken at the individual, departmental, agency and organizational levels. An essential component of addressing ethical challenges at BCCH/SHH and BCWH&HC involves fostering a culture of ethics by ensuring procedural fairness in decision-making in accordance with PHSA policies including our Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct Policy. As BCCH/SHH and BCWH&HC aims to provide quality care in a resource-constrained environment, it often faces priority-setting challenges; use of an ethical decision-making framework supports decisions that are ethically justified, fair and demonstrate public accountability.

## **Our values**



## **Ethics is About**

- Determining what we should do – i.e. what decisions are morally right or acceptable;
- Explaining why we should do it – i.e. justifying our decision using values; and
- Describing how we should do it – i.e. outlining a process for enacting the decision.

Ethical issues in health care occur on a daily basis and include, but are not limited to the following domains:

- Shared decision making with patients/families
- Assent, consent and surrogate decision-making
- Ethical practices in end-of-life care
- Patient privacy and confidentiality
- Professionalism in patient care
- Ethical practices in research
- Ethical practices in business and management
- Ethical practices in resource allocation

Ethical issues are often framed as “should” questions. For example:

- To what degree should children and adolescents be involved in making healthcare decisions for themselves?
- How should we determine the best course of action when there are different opinions among or between family members and/or healthcare providers about treatment goals or the plan of care?
- Should life-sustaining treatment be continued for a patient for whom the treatment is burdensome with minimal benefit?
- If there is a shortage of care beds, how should decisions about who to admit be made?

- How should the organization make decisions about how to allocate funding across its many programs?
- Should a patient be informed of a “near miss” in his or her care?

**2. Ethics Frameworks**

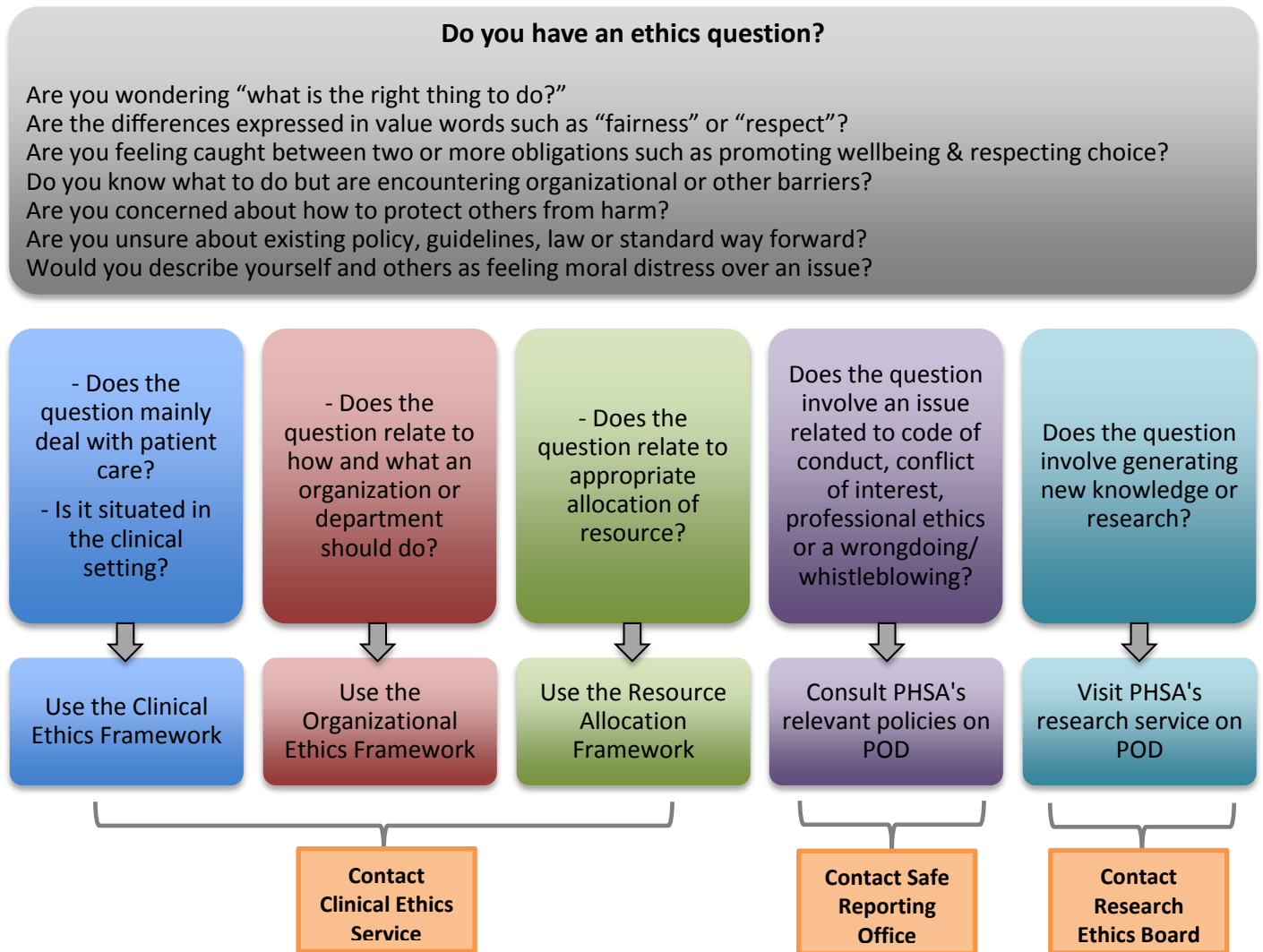
1. Use of an ethical decision-making framework can help an individual, team or community to work through an ethical issue to reach an ethically appropriate decision. The frameworks enable individuals and teams to work together by introducing a shared systematic process, developing a shared language, facilitating communication, and building a common understanding of how to approach ethical challenges. Moreover, adhering to such a systematic process can ensure procedural justice (i.e. fair process in decision-making) which is essential in reaching socially acceptable, publically accountable and ethically appropriate decisions.

2. To support the different types of ethical issues faced by the organization, BCCH/SHH and BCWH&HC has framed 3 decision making areas:

- Clinical – Schedule 1.1A and 1.1B
- Organizational – Schedule 1.2
- Resource Allocation – Schedule 1.3

**3. Resource Support**

To help determine which resource most closely meets your needs please use the following table:



## Schedule 1.1A: Clinical Ethics

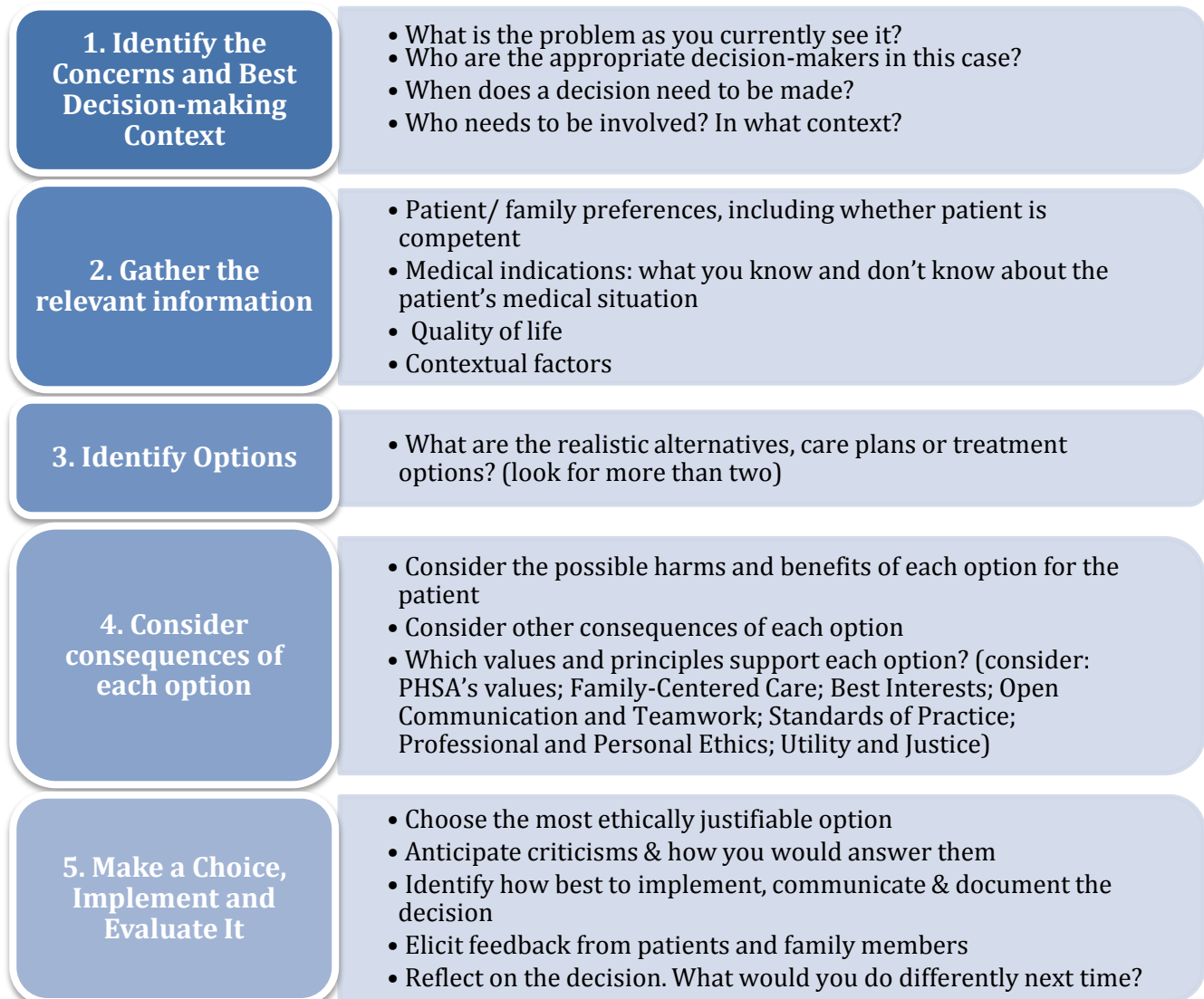
The Clinical Ethics Framework aims to:

- Enable staff, physicians, and leaders to identify ethical issues related to their work;
- Foster a culture of ethics at BCCH/SHH and BCWH&HC, in order to improve patient care and outcomes;
- Support patients and their families through difficult ethical decisions related to their, or their loved one's care\*
- Empower staff, physicians and administrators to make confident, ethical decisions that align with organizational values and ethical principles;
- Assist personnel to analyze, reflect upon and resolve ethical dilemmas or issues via a step-by-step, fair process.

The Ethics Service provides assistance to healthcare professionals, patients, and families in the identification, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas that arise in the care of individual patients. Clinical ethics consultations are conducted by an individual (ethicist) or team/small group (e.g. an ethicist with three to four members ethics committee members) using an established ethics framework.

Clinical ethics consultations seek to:

- Bring clarity as a response to ethical questions as appropriate
- Identify and help balance various, sometimes conflicting, interests in a particular case.
- Assist in developing and evaluating a care plan
- Assist in identifying choices that will lead to consensus



\* Patients and family members can also use the supplementary "Decision Making Tool for Patients and Families Facing Difficult Healthcare Decisions" to aid in complex decision making. See schedule 1.1B

## Schedule 1.1B: A Decision Making Tool for Patients and Families Facing Difficult Healthcare Decisions

Sometimes it can be difficult to know what the right health care decision is, for either yourself or a loved one. Working through the questions below on your own or with your health care team can help clarify priorities, values and perspectives and make it easier to discuss these with your health care provider and reach your decision.

This tool helps:

- Identify and discuss personal values, wishes and beliefs that influence your health care goals for you or your child;
- Support discussions about prolonging life and exploring what quality of life means to you in the context of your health or the health of your child;
- Establish clear goals of care that are well understood and shared by the patient, family and health care team.

<b>1. Clarify the decision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What decision do you face? State the problem as you see it.</li><li>• Do you want to make this decision yourself? Or share this decision with someone else? Would you rather someone else decides?</li></ul>
<b>2. Gather the relevant information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What facts are not known?</li><li>• Do you know enough to make a decision? What else would you like to know?</li><li>• Who else might you like to speak with?</li><li>• When do you need to decide?</li><li>• What are the consequences for decisions I make now for options down the road?</li></ul>
<b>3. Are you clear about which benefits and risks <i>matter most</i> to you?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What does quality of life mean to you?</li><li>• As you think about the future what matters most to you?</li><li>• Is spirituality or cultural beliefy important to you in understanding you or your child's illness?</li><li>• Is a past experience shaping your perspective?</li><li>• Where do my values fit into this decision?</li></ul>
<b>4. Which options are available to you?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider each option by asking questions like:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will this option change the outcome for me/my child?</li><li>• What will it be like for me/my child to go through this?</li><li>• Could it make me/my child feel worse? If so, for how long?</li><li>• What is the likely impact of this decision on us as a family/our support system/ our community?</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>5. Evaluate your options</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the benefits and risks of each option?</li><li>• How much do they matter?</li><li>• What other services, support or information would be useful to you?</li><li>• Do you have enough support, information and advice from others to make a choice?</li></ul>
<b>6. Decision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss your decision with your health care providers and family members/supports.</li></ul>

The Ethics Service is available to provide assistance to patients and their families as they reflect on their goals, consider their options and make decisions regarding their care in discussions with their health care team. The steps outlined above provide a way to work through this process in a systematic, structured way that can help make sure that patient and family values and perspectives are always at the centre of health care decisions.

## Schedule 1.2 Organizational Ethics

Organizational ethics is an emerging field in health care ethics, which examines the ethics dimensions of decision-making in health organizations. This includes enabling people to utilize shared values to set goals and direct actions as well as to clarify and evaluate policies and practices. An organizational ethics consultation process encourages the application of an ethics “lens” to decisions made at all levels of BCCH/SHH and BCWH&HC.

The purpose of this framework is to integrate ethical analysis into organizational health care decision-making to address organizational-level ethical issues. The range of issues appropriate for organizational ethics consultation is quite broad. They include, but are not limited to questions about partnering with external organizations, employment relationships, and addressing situations of potential conflicts of interest.

Specifically, the Organizational Ethics Framework aims to:

- Enable staff, administrators, and leaders to identify ethical issues related to their work;
- Foster a culture of ethics at BCCH/SHH and BCWH&HC;
- Empower staff, leaders and administrators to make confident, ethical decisions that align with organizational values and ethical principles;
- Assist personnel to analyze, reflect upon and resolve ethical dilemmas or issues via a step-by-step, fair process.

### 1. Recognize an Ethical Issue

- Does this decision involve a choice between a good and bad alternative, or perhaps between two "goods" or between two "bads"?
- Could this decision be seen as a breach of organizational, professional or personal values or a conflict of interest?
- Could this decision cause undue harm to someone / some group?

### 2. Gather the relevant information

- What are the relevant facts of the case? What facts are not known?
- What individuals and groups have an important stake in the outcome and will they have a reasonable opportunity to participate in the process?
- Are some concerns more important? Why?
- What are the options for acting?

### 3. Evaluate Alternative Actions

- Which option will produce the most good and do the least harm?
- Which option best respects the rights of all who have a stake?
- Which option treats people equally or proportionately?
- Which option best serves the community, not just some members?
- Which option best supports the mandate and values of the organization?

### 4. Make a Decision and implement it

- Considering all these approaches, what is the most ethically justifiable option?
- How can the decision be implemented with the greatest care and attention to the concerns of all stakeholders?

### 5. Evaluate outcome

- How did the decision turn out and what have we learned from this specific situation?

## Schedule 1.3 Resource Allocation

The purpose of this framework is to integrate ethical analysis into meso-level health care decision-making. It incorporates evidence and ethics to guide decision makers in making resource allocation decisions.

Specifically, the Resource Allocation Decision Framework aims to:

- Enable staff, administrators, and leaders to identify ethical issues related to their work;
- Empower staff, leaders and administrators to make confident, ethical decisions that align with organizational values and ethical principles;
- Assist personnel to analyze, reflect upon and resolve ethical dilemmas or issues via a step-by-step, fair process.

### 1. Ensure the allocation question and relevant facts are clear

- Clarify the distribution or allocation question by asking:
  - What is being (re)distributed? For what reasons?
  - By which decision-makers?
  - To what persons? From which persons?

### 2. Substantive Issues

- What is the situation without the change in allocation/distribution of resources?
- How will the situation be altered by various allocation-distribution options?
- How will the proposed options change this?
- Will any units/departments/group be unduly 'burdened' or disadvantaged for the good of others? If so, what efforts will be made to attend to this or to ensure reciprocity?
- Are all parties being dealt with fairly (patients, families, providers)?

### 3. Procedural justice

- Does the process make room for *all* relevant parties to have a fair say?
- Do the decision-makers have the necessary information?
  - Will those most seriously impacted by the decisions have reasonable opportunity to participate in the process?
  - Will consultations be carried out with stakeholders with respect to the impact and acceptability of the proposed change?
- Is the process used to make decisions open and accountable?
- Are appropriate measures for assessing impact of change be in place?
- What processes will be in place to hear and consider complaints?

### 4. Duties and Obligations

- Does the proposed option/change promote the health care interests of present and future patient populations?
- Is the proposed option consistent with the mandate and values of the organization
- Could the proposed option/change undermine public trust in the health care organization?
- Identify areas where proposed option/change may create or be perceived as being in conflict of interest and address these.
- Is the proposed option/change consistent with good stewardship?
- Is the proposed option/change sustainable? Does it take into meaningful account the sustainability of resources needed

### 5. Make a Choice, Implement and Evaluate It

- Choose the option with best balance of values and outcomes
- Anticipate criticisms and how you would answer them.
- Identify how best to implement, communicate and document the decision
- Reflect on the decision. What would you do differently next time?



## Schedule 2 BCCH/SHH and BCWH&HC Ethics Service

### 1. Research ethics

BCCH/SHH and BCWH&HC has well-established processes and procedures to ensure that all research undertaken within the organization meets the highest ethical standards. Research ethics review is conducted via the UBC/ Children's and Women's Research Ethics Board (REB). The C&W REB is responsible for review of all research (before it is initiated) that involves human subjects, their information or their tissue. Research proposals are assessed for ethical acceptability using regional, national and international guidelines (including the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2) on Research Ethics).

### 2. Ethics Strategy and Framework

The BCCH/SHH and BCWH & HC Ethics Strategy and Framework is a primary resource for guiding ethical decision-making and practice in our organization. It provides decision-making tools in three areas: 1) clinical ethics; 2) organizational ethics; and 3) resource allocation.

### 3. Ethics Consultation Service

The primary goal of the Ethics Service is to enhance clinical care and its outcomes for children, youth, women and their families through the provision of specialized consultation, education, advice and information in identifying, analyzing and resolving ethical uncertainty or conflicts that arise in health care. The Ethics Consultation Service provides:

- *Clinical ethics consultation* - available to assist healthcare providers or interdisciplinary teams, patients, and families in the identification, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas that arise in the care of individuals. Clinical ethics consultations are conducted by an individual ethicist or team/small group (ethicist with three to four ethics committee members). Ethics consultation may be helpful for addressing issues such as: discrepancies between clinical judgment and the wishes of patients or their surrogates; limitation of treatment; surrogate decision-making; patient's capacity to give consent; the appropriate goals of therapy; respecting patient confidentiality; and resolving tensions related to religious beliefs or cultural backgrounds. In other situations, the requestor may seek input on the ethical permissibility of a proposed course of treatment.
- *Organizational ethics consultations* – organizational ethics examines the ethics dimensions of decision-making in health organizations. The issues appropriate for organizational ethics consultation are broad and they range from questions about resource allocation to partnering with external organizations to employment relationships and addressing situations of potential conflicts of interest. An ethics consult can be requested by anyone in our organization, and they are designed to facilitate discussion of an organizational issue within a unit, department or site.

The Ethicist can be contacted by e-mail at [alice.virani@cw.bc.ca](mailto:alice.virani@cw.bc.ca) or by phone at 604-875-3182. Please also visit ethics on the POD for quick links to frameworks, ethics resources and educational opportunities: <http://pod/hcq/ethics/pages/Default.aspx>.

### 4. Ethics Committees

Currently, there are three ethics committees, one serving each of the following: BC Children's Hospital, Sunny Hill Health Centre, and BC Women's Hospital. The Ethics Committees act in a consultative and advisory capacity committees and support the Ethics Service through retrospective review of clinical cases or assisting with case consultation when different diverse expertise is needed. They provide systematic ethical analysis and review of our agencies' policies related to ethics. The committees also develop guidelines and position papers on both clinical and organizational issues related to ethics (e.g. DNAR policy, guidelines for social networking, donation after cardiac death, and pandemic ethics framework). In addition, the committees provide input on ethics education planning and capacity building.

### 5. Ethics Support and Capacity Building

In an effort to build capacity for leaders, staff, and providers to address ethical issues that arise within their work, a number of training and educational resources available, including:

- Noon-time events such as monthly "Ethics for Lunch" educational sessions (sessions are recorded and available on the POD)
- Monthly web-based ethics cases distributed via the C&W newsletter (past cases available on the POD)
- Unit specific 'moral distress' discussion and debrief sessions to help teams dealing with difficult ethical situations
- Case based ethics discussion facilitated by an ethicist
- Interdisciplinary ethics rounds facilitated by an ethicist
- Ethics workshops, grand rounds, lectures, and ethics supported conferences



## **6. Annual Report**

The Ethics Service compiles an Annual Report detailing ethics consultation trends, educational activities, policy/ guideline initiatives and other relevant work conducted by the Ethics Service team. The report is presented at a variety of leadership forums and is used to track trends in order to develop an appropriate strategy for ongoing and future education, training and research projects.