

Ethics Framework

St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital (STEGH) is committed to fostering the highest standards of ethics and integrity in the work that we do - including in our relationship with patients and families, and in our corporate services and governance practices. STEGH supports ethical decision making at all levels of the organization. Ethical practice is founded on respect for individuals, evidence-based care and responsible use of resources. When engaging in relationships with patients, health care professionals are obligated to follow the guidelines defined within their respective regulatory body's Code of Ethics.

The STEGH Framework for Supporting Ethical Practice allows us to meet goals and objectives aligned/allocated within the corporate Mission, Vision, and Values (*Compassion; Innovation, Accountability, Respect and Collaboration*).

PURPOSE: The Framework provides guidance to support ethical practice and decision making across all areas of operation at STEGH. The Framework assists healthcare providers and decision-makers to reflect on three key questions:

- What should we do?
- Why should we do it?
- How should it be done?

COMPONENTS OF FRAMEWORK

Awareness: of what constitutes an ethical dilemma and of the Framework and resources available to support ethical decision-making.

Process: formal processes for responding to and managing quality ethics-related issues and concerns.

STEGH's SBAR Decision Making Tool outlines the Situation, Background, Assessment, and Recommendation for responding to and working through an ethical concern.

Case Review: review of a situation following the event.

Consultation: designed to facilitate discussion and decision-making in difficult situations as they unfold.

STEGH's Case Review/Case Consultation Algorithm provides a structure for these processes.

Education: capacity building within the organization to align ethical decision-making with, quality assurance measures and patient-centred care may include case review forums; in-services; professional development and specific quality ethics projects and initiatives.

Research: process and parameters outlined in STEGH's "Research – Request to Participate" policy.

Ethics Committee: the mandate of STEGH's Ethics Committee is to gather and review information regarding trends in ethics issues, both as they pertain to the healthcare industry and specifically to the organization, to facilitate and inform quality improvement; enhance understanding of ethical issues and promote optimal ethical practices. STEGH's Ethics Committee is accountable to the Quality Committee.

Resources:

Ethicist: STEGH retains an ethicist. The ethicist supports ethics consultations, provides education and reviews policies and research as required. The ethicist tracks and trends ethical issues as they arise more generally in healthcare and brings that information back to support STEGH. The ethicist is available to all members of the STEGH community.

STEGH Ethics Lead: Vice President Patient Services and Chief Nursing Executive (ext. 2076).

Policies: guide providers in deliberation and action.

ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS:

An ethical dilemma is a situation in which:

- Two or more values may be in conflict
- Some harm may be caused regardless of a decision
- One is unsure of what to do

*Ethical decisions should be transparent and identify both the decision and the rationale involved. Ethical principles shall be used to identify ethical situations and their resolution.

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STEGH's decision making tool, follows the “SBAR” (Situation-Background-Assessment-Recommendation) model that incorporates aspects of the Accountability for Reasonableness conditions and is similar to the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) quality improvement process. The tool is grounded in STEGH’s Mission, Vision and Values and aligns with our Code of Conduct and Guiding Principles. It is a common algorithm/process familiar to staff in guiding the communication of key information to others.

The tool identifies the four components of the decision-making process: situation; background; assessment; and recommendation. These four components guide ethical decision making.

Situation: Understand the Problem

- Tell the story
- What are the facts?
- Why do we need to make a decision now?
- What is the problem that needs solving? What is the ethical dilemma/problem?
- Who has the authority to make the decision?
- Who needs to be involved?

Assessment: Explore Options

- What options are there?
- What is the impact/consequence of each option?
- What are the risks/benefits of each option?
- How do the options align to our values and principles?
- Evaluate options
- Who needs to be involved?

Background: Share the Context

- Who are the stakeholders?
- Are there any personal biases?
- Consider other perspectives
- What values or principles are present in the conflict?
- Are there any organizational policies to consider?
- Who needs to be involved?

Recommendation: Develop a Plan

- Determine the plan
- Determine the decision
- What is the implementation plan?
- Who needs to do what?
- What is communication plan?
- How will we evaluate or change the plan if needed?
- Who needs to be involved?



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