

## Ethics Consultant Proficiency Assessment Tool

The purpose of this tool is to help consultants assess their proficiency in the skills and knowledge required to provide competent health care ethics consultation (HCEC).

After you complete this tool, you should work with your Ethics Consultation Coordinator to create an individualized professional development plan.

**DIRECTIONS:** Please place an “X” in the box that best describes your present skill or knowledge level. For the purposes of this assessment, *basic skill* is defined as the ability to use the skill in common and straightforward consultations. *Advanced skill* is defined as the ability to use the skill effectively in more complex cases.<sup>1</sup>

*Note: ASBH suggests that at least one individual on the consultation service possess advanced skill or knowledge in certain core elements. These items are noted with an asterisk (\*). VA suggests additional core elements in which at least one individual on the consultation service should possess advanced skill or knowledge. These items are noted with a double asterisk (\*\*).*

Ethical Assessment Skills	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
	Not Skilled	Somewhat Skilled	Skilled	Very Skilled	Expert
Skills in identifying the nature of the values uncertainty or conflict that underlies the need for ethics consultation. <i>Rate your ability to:</i>					
Discern and gather relevant data (e.g., medical facts, patients’ preferences and interests, and other participants’ preferences and interests).					
Assess the social and interpersonal dynamics of the consultation (e.g., power relations, ethnic, cultural, and religious differences).					
Distinguish the ethical dimensions of the consultation from other, often overlapping dimensions (e.g., legal, institutional, medical).					
Clearly articulate the ethical concern(s) and the central ethics question(s).					
Identify various assumptions that involved parties bring to the consultation (e.g., regarding the quality of life, risk taking, institutional interest, unarticulated agendas, what health and illness means to the patient or surrogate).					
Identify, clarify, and distinguish the relevant beliefs and values of involved parties.					

<sup>1</sup> American Society for Bioethics and Humanities. (2011). *The Report of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities: Core Competencies for Healthcare Ethics Consultation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Glenview, IL: ASBH.

Identify the consultant's own relevant moral values and intuitions and how these might influence the process or analysis.					
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall ability to identify the nature of the values uncertainty or conflict that underlies the need for ethics consultation?*					

Ethical Analysis Skills	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
	Not Skilled	Somewhat Skilled	Skilled	Very Skilled	Expert
Skills in analyzing the values uncertainty or conflict that underlies the need for an ethics consultation. <i>Rate your ability to:</i>					
Access relevant ethics knowledge (e.g., health care ethics, law, institutional policy, professional codes, research/scholarship, and religious teachings).*					
Clarify relevant ethical concepts (e.g., confidentiality, privacy, informed consent, best interest, professional duties).					
Identify the ethically appropriate decision maker (e.g., patient, surrogate, health care team, or hospital administrator). **					
Critically evaluate and use relevant knowledge of health care ethics, law (without giving legal advice), institutional policy, and professional codes.					
Apply relevant ethical considerations in helping to analyze the consultation.					
Identify and justify a range of ethically acceptable options and their consequences.					
Evaluate evidence and arguments for and against different options.					
Research peer-reviewed clinical and bioethics journals and books, and access relevant policies, laws and reports, online databases, and/or libraries.					
Recognize and acknowledge personal limitations and possible areas of conflict between personal moral views and one's role in HCEC (e.g., accepting group decisions with which one disagrees, but which are ethically and legally acceptable).					
Be familiar and comfortable with diversity among patients, staff, and institutions, and address it in relation to an ethics consultation.					
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall ability to analyze the values uncertainty or conflict that underlies the need for ethics consultation? **					

Process Skills	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
	Not Skilled	Somewhat Skilled	Skilled	Very Skilled	Expert
<p>Skills needed to effectively respond to an ethics consultation request, including facilitating formal and informal meetings, fostering moral consensus, and ability to gather, interpret, and document information.</p> <p><b><i>The next few items assess skills in responding to the consultation request.</i></b></p> <p><i>Rate your ability to:</i></p>					
Establish realistic expectations about the consultation process.*					
Determine whether a particular request will involve only the HCEC service or is appropriate for joint effort or referral.					
Determine which consultations are appropriate for an individual consultant, team, or committee.					
Identify which individuals (e.g., patient, health care professionals, family members) need to be involved in a consultation.					
Utilize institutional structures and resources to facilitate implementation of the chosen option.*					
Gather and interpret information from the health record.					
Visit and interview patients in various clinical settings.					
Document consultations clearly and thoroughly in internal HCEC service records and in patient health records.*					
Summarize and communicate consultations to relevant parties.*					
Communicate and collaborate effectively with other responsible individuals, departments, or divisions within the institution.*					
Identify underlying systems issues and bring them to the attention of the appropriate resource for handling such concerns at the appropriate level.*					
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall ability to respond to an ethics consultation request?					

Process Skills	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
<b><i>These next few items assess skill in facilitating a formal meeting when needed.</i></b>	<b>Not Skilled</b>	<b>Somewhat Skilled</b>	<b>Skilled</b>	<b>Very Skilled</b>	<b>Expert</b>
<i>Rate your ability to:</i>					
Effectively begin a meeting by introducing members, clarifying participants' roles and expectations, identifying the goal of a meeting, and establishing expectations for equal involvement and confidentiality of what is discussed.					
Keep parties focused to reach a meaningful conclusion or stopping point.					
Establish a timeline for implementing agreed-upon tasks or "next steps".					
Discern the need for additional meetings.					
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall ability to facilitate a formal meeting?*					

Process Skills	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
<b><i>These next few items assess skill in fostering consensus among participants involved in the consultation.</i></b>	<b>Not Skilled</b>	<b>Somewhat Skilled</b>	<b>Skilled</b>	<b>Very Skilled</b>	<b>Expert</b>
<i>Rate your ability to:</i>					
Attend to power imbalances and attempt to level the playing field.					
Mediate among competing moral views.					
Engage in creative problem solving (i.e., help parties to "think outside the box").					
Create an atmosphere of trust that respects privacy and confidentiality and that allows participants to feel free to express their concerns.					
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall ability to foster consensus among parties involved in the consultation? **					

<b>Evaluative and Quality Improvement Skills</b>	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
	<b>Not Skilled</b>	<b>Somewhat Skilled</b>	<b>Skilled</b>	<b>Very Skilled</b>	<b>Expert</b>
<p>Skills needed to monitor and improve the performance of the HCEC service and contribute to improving the quality of care in the wider institution.</p> <p><b><i>These next few items assess quality improvement skills relating to ethics consultation.</i></b></p> <p><i>Rate your ability to:</i></p>					
Identify or establish appropriate criteria for evaluation of different kinds of consultation (i.e., case and non-case).					
Collect useful data about consultation access and quality, including feedback from individuals involved in ethics consultations, and record that data in a systematic fashion.					
Recognize and analyze possible structural or systemic barriers to effective consultation process in specific cases.					
Recognize and analyze possible structural or systemic obstacles to excellent care that may have contributed to the need for consultation.					
Distinguish between process and outcome, scrutinizing each separately.					
Recognize patterns (i.e., frequently repeated consults about the same issue, or from the same unit or department).					
Demonstrate sensitivity to context.					
Understand how structures can enable or constrain behaviors.					
Consider the implications of recommendations and results of consultations for the wider organization, including its mission and ethical standards.					
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall quality improvement skills related to ethics consultation?*					

<b>Running an Effective HCEC Service</b>	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
<p>The knowledge and skills required to effectively oversee and run the HCEC service itself.</p> <p><b><i>These next few items assess skill in running an effective HCEC service. If you are not an Ethics Consultation Coordinator, please proceed to the next section.</i></b></p> <p><i>Rate your ability to:</i></p>	<b>Not Skilled</b>	<b>Somewhat Skilled</b>	<b>Skilled</b>	<b>Very Skilled</b>	<b>Expert</b>
Communicate well with senior leaders.					
Identify an appropriate HCEC policy and implement HCEC process standards that match the mission of the organization.					
Choose qualified and committed ethics consultants to staff the service.					
Negotiate for adequate resources to ensure that the service can meet its obligations to those who request an ethics consultation.					
Provide appropriate mentoring, supervision, and peer review to consultants on the service.					
Withstand political pressure to compromise the mission of the consultation service.					
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall ability to run an effective HCEC service?*					

<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
<p>Skills needed to effectively communicate with others and to develop positive relationships.</p> <p><i>Rate your ability to:</i></p>	<b>Not Skilled</b>	<b>Somewhat Skilled</b>	<b>Skilled</b>	<b>Very Skilled</b>	<b>Expert</b>
Listen well and communicate interest, respect, support, and empathy involved parties.*					
Recognize and respond appropriately to suffering, moral distress, strong emotions, and other barriers to communication.*					
Educate involved parties regarding the ethical dimensions of the consultation.*					
Elicit the moral views of involved parties.*					
Accurately and respectfully represent the views of involved parties to others when needed.*					
Enable involved parties to communicate effectively and be heard by other parties.*					
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall ability to effectively communicate with others and to develop positive relationships?*					

<b>Core Knowledge: Moral Reasoning</b>	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
<i>Rate your knowledge of:</i>	Not Knowledgeable	Somewhat Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Very Knowledgeable	Expert
Moral reasoning and ethical theory, including familiarity with a variety of approaches to ethical analysis (e.g., consequentialist, deontological, principle-based, casuistic).*					

<b>Core Knowledge: Common Ethics Issues and Concepts</b>	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
<i>Rate your knowledge of:</i>	Not Knowledgeable	Somewhat Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Very Knowledgeable	Expert
Shared decision making with patients (e.g., decision-making capacity, informed consent process, surrogate decision making, advance care planning, limits to patient choice).*					
Ethical practices in end-of-life care (e.g., cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), life-sustaining treatments, medical futility, hastening death, death and postmortem issues).*					
Ethical practices at the beginning of life (e.g., reproductive technologies, surrogate parenthood, in vitro fertilization, sterilization, maternal-fetal conflict, abortion, best interest considerations for critically ill newborns, the concept of “person,” the right to privacy, and the application of “double effect” in this context).*					
Patient privacy and confidentiality (e.g., patient control of personal health information, exceptions to confidentiality, duty to warn).*					
Professionalism in patient care (e.g., conflicts of interest, truth telling, difficult patients, cultural/religious/spiritual sensitivity).*					

<b>Core Knowledge: Common Ethics Issues and Concepts</b>	Novice		Basic		Advanced	
<i>Rate your knowledge of:</i>	Not Knowledgeable	Somewhat Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Very Knowledgeable	Expert	
Ethical practices in resource allocation (e.g., systems-level or macro allocation, individual-level or micro allocation).*						
Ethical practices in business and management (e.g., performance incentives, data management, recordkeeping).*						
Ethical practices in government service (e.g., fiduciary duty to the public, use of government resources, duty to report waste, fraud, or abuse).*						
Ethical practices in research (e.g., organizational research integrity, individual investigator and research staff integrity, research design, research implementation, research dissemination).*						
Ethical practices in the everyday workplace (e.g., employee privacy, appropriate employee-employer relationships, openness to ethics discussion).*						

<b>Health Care System</b>	Novice		Basic		Advanced	
<i>Rate your knowledge of:</i>	Not Knowledgeable	Somewhat Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Very Knowledgeable	Expert	
Health care systems as they relate to HCEC (e.g., managed care systems, medical home, private and public payment systems, and institutional review boards).*						

<b>Health Law</b>	Novice		Basic		Advanced	
<i>Rate your knowledge of:</i>	Not Knowledgeable	Somewhat Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Very Knowledgeable	Expert	
Health law relevant to HCEC (e.g., informed consent, life-sustaining treatment, advance directives, privacy, organ donation, disclosure of adverse events, research ethics).*						

<b>Clinical Context</b>	Novice		Basic		Advanced	
	<b>Not Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Somewhat Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Very Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Expert</b>	
<i>Rate your knowledge of:</i>						
Basic medical terms, common disease processes, diagnostic and therapeutic methods, emerging technologies, and care delivery services and settings (e.g., intensive care, rehabilitation, long-term care, palliative and hospice care).						
Different health care professional roles and expertise.						
Factors that influence the process of health care decision making by patients, family members, and health care professionals.						
Historically disadvantaged groups (e.g., poor, uneducated, disabled, incarcerated, or targets of bigotry).						
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall knowledge of the clinical context as it relates to HCEC?*						

<b>Local Health Care Institution</b>	Novice		Basic		Advanced	
	<b>Not Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Somewhat Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Very Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Expert</b>	
<i>Rate your knowledge of:</i>						
The local institution's mission statement, organizational structure, range of services, sites of care delivery, and medical records system.						
Decision-making processes or frameworks.						
HCEC resources, including how the HCEC service is financed; the working relationships between the HCEC service and other departments, particularly legal counsel, risk management, pastoral care, social work, and the palliative care service; and qualifications of fellow consultants staffing the HCEC service.						

<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall knowledge of the local health care institution as it relates to HCEC?*					
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<b>Health Care Institution's Policies</b>	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
<i>Rate your knowledge of:</i>	Not Knowledgeable	Somewhat Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Very Knowledgeable	Expert
Applicable local policies relevant to HCEC (e.g., informed consent, life-sustaining treatment, advance directives, privacy, organ donation, disclosure of adverse events, research ethics).					
Applicable regional and/or system-wide policies relevant to HCEC (e.g., informed consent, life-sustaining treatment, advance directives, privacy, organ donation, disclosure of adverse events, research ethics).					
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall knowledge of your health care institution's policies relevant to HCEC?*					

<b>Beliefs and Perspectives of the Local Patient and Staff Population</b>	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
<i>Rate your knowledge of:</i>	Not Knowledgeable	Somewhat Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Very Knowledgeable	Expert
Important beliefs and perspectives that bear on the health care of racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious groups served by the facility.					
Perspectives of persons with disabilities and their loved ones.					
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall knowledge of the beliefs and perspectives of the local patient and staff population?*					

<b>Codes of Ethics</b>	Novice	Basic		Advanced	
<i>Rate your knowledge of:</i>	<b>Not Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Somewhat Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Very Knowledgeable</b>	<b>Expert</b>
Relevant codes of ethics and professional conduct, including codes of ethics from relevant professional organizations (e.g., medicine, nursing, and health care executives), health care facility's code of conduct, patients' bill of rights and responsibilities.					
Relevant standards of The Joint Commission and other accrediting bodies.					
<b>Based on the preceding items</b> , how would you rate your overall knowledge of relevant codes of ethics and accreditation standards?*					