

From the Fall 2003 Newsletter

LOOKING FORWARD

Ethics Self-Assessment Toolkit

Ethical health care practices are essential to health care quality—but how do you measure ethics quality? Through its **Ethics Self-Assessment Toolkit (ESAT)** initiative, the National Center for Ethics in Health Care is developing tools to make that possible.

As part of **ESAT**, a Staff Survey on Clinical and Organizational Ethics is currently in its final phase of pilot testing. The survey is designed to help facilities evaluate their ethics programs and practices by eliciting staff perspectives on current ethics-related practices, ethical practice standards, and organizational factors that affect ethical health care practices.

Questions cover practices relating to shared decision making, end-of-life care, privacy and confidentiality, professionalism, resource allocation, and the ethical environment and culture. For example, questions might ask staff whether patients are provided with understandable information about their prognoses, whether clinicians emphasize relief of suffering for patients who are dying, or whether leaders communicate the reasoning behind resource allocation decisions.

The survey was pre-tested at 4 VHA facilities earlier this year to refine questions and test the validity and reliability of responses. The instrument will be available to all facilities in 2004.

A complementary Facility Workbook, which will help facilities critically examine how they currently promote ethical health care practices and guide them in designing strategies to improve the quality of their health care ethics, is in development.