

## VHA National Center for Ethics in Health Care Values and Processes for Promoting Productive and Respectful Meetings

A values-based approach to promoting a productive and respectful meeting can be distinguished from a rules-only based approach. Because rules tend to focus on compliance to a minimum standard, not an ideal provided by values, rules can't cover the entire range of behaviors and processes we want to promote. A values-based approach encourages staff to make well-considered judgments that translate VA values into action. Appealing to the organization's values (e.g., ICARE) can promote shared accountability and inspire excellence.

Shared values can help set expectations for how meeting participants should behave. Recognizing these values as part of our work can help us keep our commitments, stay engaged with one another, and meet our office's wider goals. The moderator (or facilitator) for a meeting can briefly review this document prior to each meeting or when a participant believes the meeting is straying from the articulated values and/or goals. For recurring meetings, this review can be conducted for the first meeting, then refreshed periodically over time.

1. Demonstrating respect to one another is critical in helping us all feel valued for our participation. Participants can demonstrate respect to one another by:
  - a. Listening first to others without interruption before attempting to make one's own point.
  - b. When there is conflict between staff, presume that others mean well-- "Give each other a charitable read."
  - c. Constructive criticism of other staff's ideas and suggestions is welcomed because it can serve as helpful feedback, but criticism directed at individuals can stifle participation and innovation. Constructive criticism is more likely to be accepted if it is clear, specific, and can be acted upon.
2. Setting clear goals for the meeting, and preparing an agenda prior to the meeting when necessary respects participant's time and effort. The moderator should distribute the goals and when appropriate, the agenda and other materials at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting, or with reasonable time for participants to complete any requested pre-work. The materials should be sufficiently detailed so that staff can both prepare for the meeting and have the information needed to effectively participate. Meetings should begin on time to respect participant's time and other commitments. The meeting materials should include the following information:
  - a. Amount of meeting time that will be allocated.
  - b. Individual responsible for the discussion
  - c. If any specific review or other pre-work is expected from participants
3. During the meeting the moderator should notify the group when the allotted time for the agenda item has been reached and decide whether to extend the discussion. Group input may be needed on this decision. The moderator should be mindful of the presenters who prepared other items for the agenda.
4. The input of all meeting participants is valued. Progress depends on the commitment, engagement, and participation of each team member. All participants should feel empowered to share ideas and suggestions, as well as to note if the meeting has strayed from the agenda.
5. Taking phone calls, or using one's phone (e.g., checking email, texting, internet use) can be perceived as disrespectful to other meeting participants because it appears as if one's attention is not focused on the meeting. Staff should minimize these interruptions to urgent related matters or to gathering timely and relevant information to the meeting.

*This tool was created for use in the National Center for Ethics.  
Facilities are encouraged to use, edit, or revise to best suit local  
needs.*

