

# Ethics Consultant Proficiency Assessment Tool: Nationally Compiled Results

Each year, VA ethics consultants complete the Ethics Consultation Proficiency Assessment (EC PAT) tool to rate their proficiency in knowledge and skills areas that are required to provide competent health care ethics consultation. Based in the core competencies outlined by the American Society of Bioethics and Humanities, these areas include ethical assessment skills, ethical analysis skills, evaluative and quality improvement skills, and knowledge in ethics domains and concepts. In each knowledge and skill category, consultants rate their level of proficiency as either “novice,” “basic,” or “advanced.” (“Basic” skill is defined as the ability to use the skill/knowledge in common, straightforward consultations, and “advanced” skill is the ability to use the skill/knowledge in more complex consultations.)

The self-assessment data for each consultant are summarized in the EC PAT Service Summary and reported to the National Center for Ethics in Health Care (NCEHC). To help VA ethics consultation services plan their educational offerings fiscal year 2013, the NCEHC shares aggregate national 2012 EC PAT data, which facilities can use as a benchmark by which to compare local results on service strengths and deficits. For example, EC teams can use it to rate their services’ accomplishments in the previous year, and identify gaps in knowledge and skills that can inform learning plans as part of ongoing quality improvement activities. The aggregated data also guides NCEHC in developing educational tools and materials to support all VA ethics consultation services.

The 2012 EC PAT data revealed a number of consistent findings. First, consultants tend to rate themselves as more proficient in the interpersonal skills and knowledge areas that probably relate to their clinical responsibilities. Having chaplains, social workers, nurses, and physicians (among others) on the consultation service allows

services to draw from the vast and valuable clinical expertise at each facility. Regarding knowledge proficiency, consultants tend to rate themselves as more proficient in knowledge areas where they perform greater numbers of ethics consults and less proficient in areas where they perform fewer ethics consults. The graph (below) shows the five knowledge and skill areas where the highest and lowest percentage of consultants rated themselves “advanced.”

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## Top Five National Skill and Knowledge Proficiencies

*Source: Ethics Consultants’ Ratings on the Proficiency Assessment Tool*

Over 40% of respondents rated themselves “Advanced” in the following areas:

### Skills:

- Communicate and collaborate effectively
- Enable involved parties to communicate effectively
- Accurately and respectfully represent the views of involved
- Recognize and respond appropriately to moral distress
- Listen well and communicate interest, respect, support

### Knowledge:

- Clinical context
- Shared decision making with patients
- Ethical practices in end-of-life care
- Patient privacy and confidentiality
- Professionalism in patient care