



**IntegratedEthics™  
Improvement Forum Call**

Assessing the Quality of Ethics Consultation Based on the Consultation Record: Part 2  
August 31, 2015

**Slide 0 - Welcome to Ethics Consultation Coordinators**

This is [David Alfandre](#). I am the Acting Chief of Ethics Consultation at the [National Center for Ethics in Health Care](#) and I will be moderating today's IE Ethics Consultation Improvement Forum call. Thank you for joining us today. Our topic today is: Assessing the Quality of Ethics Consultation Based on the Consultation Record: Part 2. We have a guest speaker, Dr. Robert Pearlman, Chief of Ethics Evaluation at the National Center for Ethics in Health Care.

If you did not receive a reminder email for this EC Improvement Forum call, it is possible you are not signed up for the IE listserve. You can do so easily by going to the National Center's website and under the Integrated Ethics portion of the website you will find it. The link will be available in the minutes:

<http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/integratedethics/regindex.asp>

The call schedule and summary notes are posted on the IntegratedEthics website at:

<http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/integratedethics/TA.asp>

Before I continue I want to mention that other staff from the Ethics Center typically join the call and you may be hearing from them.

Presentation shown on the call:



ECQAT slides. IF call  
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**Slide 1** - This meeting is a multimedia presentation requiring both audio and visual access.

- Audio will be available through VANTS: 800-767-1750 Access: 89506# and Online Meeting
- Visuals will be accessed through the Lync online meeting: [Join online meeting](#)

**Please call the usual VANTS line AND join the Lync online meeting.**

If you are having technical difficulties, please contact your local IT department to assist you.

I need to briefly review the overall ground rules for these calls:

- PLEASE do not put the call on hold.
- We ask that when you speak, you please begin by telling us your name, location and title so we can continue to get to know each other better.
- As you may know the Ethics Center does not audiotape these calls; instead, we provide minutes. In the field some VHA facilities are audiotaping the calls to make it possible for their colleagues to hear the full text of the discussion. As a result, this is not the venue for reporting violations, talking about individual case information, or disclosing identifiable patient information.

**Slide 2 – Announcement** – The next virtual EC Beyond the Basics Module 2: Formulating the Ethics Question training will take place on September 9<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm ET.

Registration is on TMS, though the course is takes place on Blackboard Collaborate. The link for registration is below:

[https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink\\_ECBtBEthicsQuestion](https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_ECBtBEthicsQuestion)

**Slide 3 – Announcement - Nationwide Ethics Consultation Coaching sessions**

As part of our regular efforts to improve ethics consultation quality, we have been providing VISN-level consultation coaching sessions using a de-identified facility case consultation from ECWeb. During those sessions, you've told us that you really enjoy discussing actual cases and having practice applying the CASES approach in a supportive group atmosphere. So that we can continually support the field and offer this coaching to more consultants on a consistent basis, we will be expanding this program by having nation-wide calls.

All VA ethics consultants are welcome to join any of the hour long calls we will be holding over the course of the upcoming fiscal year. In order to accommodate the varying schedules of consultants across time zones, we will be holding the sessions on different days of the week during both morning and afternoon times.

**Our first call will be on Thursday, September 10<sup>th</sup> at Noon EST.** Additional details about the call will be distributed later in the summer (e.g., VANTS #, link to the de-identified case, etc.).

The other future dates are below:

11/30/2015	Noon EST
1/13/2016	2:00 EST
2/25/2016	Noon EST
3/21/2016	Noon EST
5/16/2016	Noon EST
6/20/2016	3:00 EST
9/16/2016	11:00 EST

**Slide 4** - Thank you for attending this week's Improvement Forum call. I am Dr. Bob Pearlman, Chief of the Ethics Evaluation Service at the National Center for Ethics in Health Care, and I will be leading the discussion about assessing the quality of ethics consultation based on the written consultation record. This presentation provides an historical review of assessing quality of ethics consultation, introduces the Ethics Consultation Quality Assessment Tool (ECQAT), reviews key elements in the tool, and then provides a case for us to employ the tool, and concludes with possible future activities.

**Slide 5** - The ECQAT builds on previous work aimed at improving the quality of ethics consultation, such as the Core Competencies, CASES, and the Code of Ethics

**Slides 6 & 7** - Despite prior major efforts in this area, gaps remain. The historical focus has been mostly on knowledge, skills, and documentation of processes. When ethics experts were asked to assess the quality of two ethics consultations, they exhibited a wide range of scores; demonstrating a lack of standardization in assessing quality and emphasizing the importance of this endeavor.

**Slide 8** - The ECQAT relies on record documentation to examine ethics quality because record documentation is prevalently used and sanctioned by ASBH, it (usually) provides an accurate reflection of what is done, it fosters communication and education with other health care providers and is practical approach to measurement.

**Slides 9 & 10** - The approach to using ECQAT relies on holistic assessment, a common approach to evaluating essays. Holistic assessment requires identifying key elements (standards) and scoring criteria, as well as a process that minimizes bias and ensures reliability. A holistic approach seems more appropriate than a traditional analytic approach for ethics case consultations (e.g., develop a weighted average of individual components) because of the interdependence between key elements in an ethics consultation.

**Slide 11** - The ECQAT includes quantitative and qualitative sections. The former includes a numeric score (1-4) as an overall assessment and the latter narrative feedback (strengths and opportunities for improvement) on each key element and several supplemental factors.

**Slides 12 – 15** - The key elements are the ethics question, consultation-specific information, the ethical analysis and the conclusions and/or recommendations.

**Slides 16 – 17** - Scoring criteria are specified in the ECQAT and range from poor work (significantly flawed such that the conclusions and/or recommendations are not supportable] to strong work (having minor flaws but the conclusions and/or recommendations are easily supportable).

**Slides 18 – 19** - To ensure valid assessments of quality several mechanisms in the scoring and training processes are employed. Consultations are de-identified and scored by 2 blinded, trained reviewers. Training of reviewers is necessary and continues until they have reached “calibration,” or a satisfactory level of accuracy and inter-rater reliability.

**Slide 20** - The ECQAT includes quantitative and qualitative sections. The former includes a numeric score (1-4) as an overall assessment and the latter narrative feedback (strengths and opportunities for improvement) on each key element and several supplemental factors.

**Slide 21** – This is a summary of ECQAT:

- Focuses on the content of the ethics consultation written records
- Promotes focus for education and training of consultants
- Provides quantitative and qualitative information for QI
- Applicable for monitoring/improving quality of ethics consultation services in health care settings, as well as attestation
- Blinded scoring & trained raters promote reliability & validity

**Slide 22** - ECQAT development is ongoing. To date, a literature review informed the approach and there have been several approaches to validating the holistic approach, the key elements and scoring standards. Ongoing activities include the identification of teaching cases and further development of education and training processes.

**Slide 23** – Sample Case #2 – This Case is available on the NCEHC’s website:

[http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/ETHICS/docs/integratedethics/sample\\_case\\_dpahc\\_040315.pdf](http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/ETHICS/docs/integratedethics/sample_case_dpahc_040315.pdf)

**Slides 24 – 28** - The case is Sample Case #2 that is presented on the NCEHC web site under National Ethics Consultation Service/Ethics Consultation Quality Assessment Tool. The strengths and opportunities for each key element were reviewed. The overall assessment of ethics consultation quality was determined to be level 2, which is “less than adequate work,” meaning that is flawed in some ways that raise significant questions about whether the conclusions and/or recommendations are supportable. The NCEHC hopes that facility ethics consultation services discuss the key elements and sample cases for educational purposes. More cases will be uploaded to the web site. The NCEHC encourages ethics consultants to join the coaching sessions starting in September. If anyone has questions or would like to be considered for training as an ECQAT rater at some future date, they are encouraged to contact the speaker at [Robert.Pearlman@va.gov](mailto:Robert.Pearlman@va.gov)

**Slide 29** - Finally, several NCEHC staff have significantly contributed to the development of the ECQAT. They are Ken Berkowitz, MD; Barbara Chanko, RN, MBA; David Alfandre, MD; Mary Beth Foglia, RN, PhD; Jennifer Cohen, PhD, MPH, and Brandy Fox, MSHCE. Now I'd like to open it up for comments and questions. Please do not hesitate to speak up.

Q: Are there pre-requisites to getting trained as a rater?

A: Currently there are only a few people at the NCEHC that have been trained as raters. More information about the potential to train as a rater will be made available in time.

Q: Were the values in the sample case provided for information or should they actually be in the case documentation?

A: They should be in the case documentation.

Q: Will each of us receive a similar analysis of the cases we submitted?

A: No, the ethics question will be reviewed but the whole case will not.

**Slide 30** – Poll – Please take a moment to give feedback on today's Improvement Forum call.

**Slide 31** - The next Ethics Consultation Improvement Forum Call will be on September 14th and the focus of the call is VHA Handbook 1004.03. We look forward to you joining us then. If you have any questions related to your ethics consultation service, please contact Marilyn Mitchell, RN at [Marilyn.Mitchell@va.gov](mailto:Marilyn.Mitchell@va.gov). Take care and thank you for everything you do to take care of our Veterans.