

IntegratedEthics

Triage Tool for Ethics-Related Leadership Decisions

Are you taking full advantage of the services your facility has to offer?

VA has so many ethics-related services it can seem like alphabet soup – IEC (IntegratedEthics Council), IEPO (IntegratedEthics Program Officer), EC (Ethics Consultation), PE (Preventive Ethics), DAEO (Designated Agency Ethics Official), CBI (Compliance and Business Integrity)... Choosing the service best suited to assist you when an ethics-related decision must be made can be a challenge. By using this triage tool you can easily narrow down your choices, and receive the assistance and expertise from the right service the first time.

What is the purpose of this tool?

Many leadership decisions relate to ethics. Only a subset of these decisions are true ethical dilemmas—where there is uncertainty or conflict about values, and the right thing to do is unclear. Other leadership decisions relate to ethics in a different way. For example, some relate to a systems-level ethics quality gap (a disparity between current practices and ideal practices from an ethical perspective). Others relate to Government Ethics (legal standards of ethical conduct for employees of the executive branch). And still others relate to a report or evidence of an ethics violation (allegation or evidence of a serious risk to patients, administrative misconduct, or non compliance with legal or regulatory standards). Each of these types of ethics-related decisions needs to be handled differently and involves different organizational structures. When confronting ethics-related decisions, the first thing a leader must do is determine the type of decision that needs to be made. This Triage Tool for Ethics-Related Leadership Decisions was designed to help leaders do just that.

How should this tool be used?

When you become aware that an ethics-related leadership decision needs to be made, use the tool to determine what type of decision it is (i.e., a decision that relates to an ethical concern, a decision that relates to a systems-level ethics quality gap, a decision that relates to Government Ethics, or a decision that relates to an ethics violation). Sometimes a decision may be more than one type. If the decision relates to an ethical concern, use the Ethical Leadership Quality Check to consider if you have the important facts, have involved all relevant stakeholders, and that you can provide a strong ethical justification for the decision based on organizational and professional values, positive and negative consequences, and other factors. Using the Ethical Leadership Quality Check ensures an appropriately systematic decision making process that is informed, participatory, values-based, beneficial, systems-focused, and reasonable.

Once you have all the important facts, have involved all relevant stakeholders, and can provide a strong ethical justification, you can proceed to make the decision without seeking additional input. For more controversial or high stakes ethics-related decisions, you should consider involving the IntegratedEthics Council or another leadership committee, chartering a special workgroup, or using a formal decision-making framework. Regardless of the decision process used, you should communicate the decision to relevant stakeholders, explaining the decision making process and ethical justification for the decision.

For further information on the Ethical Leadership concepts presented in this document click [here](#).