



August 29, 2013

IntegratedEthics[®] Handbook: Frequently Asked Questions

What's new?

The updated version of **VHA Handbook 1004.06, IntegratedEthics[®]** (The IE Handbook) has been published and is effective as of August 29, 2013.

Where can I get a copy of the IE Handbook?

The IE Handbook and supporting materials are located on the National Center for Ethics in Health Care webpages:

- *Intranet* Health Care Ethics Policy page
<http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/activities/policy.asp>
- *Internet* page at <http://www.ethics.va.gov/activities/policy.asp>.

The IE Handbook is also available on the VHA Forms and Publications website at <http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/>.

Why was the IE Handbook updated?

When the IE Handbook was initially issued in 2009, the IE program was in the early stages of implementation. The IE Handbook has been updated to reflect the maturation of the IE program and to support current IE practice in the field. Many of the revisions to the IE Handbook were based on comments and feedback from IE staff in the field.

What changed in the IE Handbook?

The IE Handbook has been updated in many ways, including revisions to the format and content. We encourage you to review the policy closely. Some examples of major changes include: new sections that summarize the framework for IE, its goals, core functions, and organizational structures at the national, VISN, and local level. The updated IE Handbook also delineates the responsibilities of the IE Program Officer, Ethics Consultation Coordinator, Preventive Ethics Coordinator, Ethical Leadership Coordinator, and facility Director.

Does the national policy require the facility Director to be the Ethical Leadership Coordinator?

The original version of the IE Handbook required the facility Director to function in the role of the Ethical Leadership coordinator (EL Coordinator). The updated IE Handbook establishes that the facility Director is responsible for serving as the EL Coordinator or

designating another member of the executive “Quadrad” or equivalent senior leadership team if that leader would be more effective in this role. The facility Director is responsible for serving as a role model for ethical leadership and this cannot be delegated. A new section delineates the responsibilities of the EL Coordinator (paragraph 17).

What’s new for the IE Council?

The updated IE Handbook contains a new subsection that lays out the charge of the IE Council (subparagraph 9e). For example, the IE Council is charged with reviewing and making recommendations for assignment of staff to designated IE positions, establishing local annual performance and quality improvement goals for the facility IE program based on relevant data sources like the IE Staff Survey and the IE Facility Workbook, and ensuring that IE staff receive protected time to participate in IE activities. The updated IE Handbook also clarifies that IE Council membership should include subject matter experts and facility leaders who regularly encounter ethical concerns and are engaged in improving ethics quality at the facility. We encourage direct involvement of senior leaders in the IE program at the facility level.

What’s new for Ethics Consultation?

The updated IE Handbook clarifies the role of the EC Coordinator, consultants, and ECWeb Administrator. It also adds parameters that ensure availability and timely response of the EC Service, suggests minimum consultant training requirements, clarifies the appropriate EC model for different consultation requests, clarifies EC evaluation activities including new practices such as use of the recently developed Ethics Consultation Service Proficiency Assessment Tool, and highlights how EC is integrated within the IE Council and the facility.

What’s new for Preventive Ethics?

The updated IE Handbook clarifies the role of the PE function within the IE program and highlights how PE is integrated within the IE Council. The updated IE Handbook also defines more clearly what is an active PE function by designating that each facility complete at least two PE cycles. Additionally, it defines minimum PE function evaluation requirements using IE approved tools, and incorporates the use of the newly developed PE tools such as the PE Choosing Issues tool.

Is there a template for developing local IE policy?

Every facility must update their local IE policy to align it with VHA Handbook 1004.06. A model Medical Center Memorandum (MCM) template has fields for drafters to insert facility-related information. The model MCM may not conform to formatting or other specific requirements for local policy. Facilities are not required to use the model MCM, however use will ensure that local policy aligns with the national policy. As with all ethics-related policies, the IE Council is charged with reviewing and participating in the development and implementation of the local IE policy. The IE MCM template is available on the Health Care Ethics Policy page at:

<http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/activities/policy.asp>.

What steps need to be taken to implement the updated policy?

The national IE Handbook must be implemented on the local level 180 days from the August 29, 2013 date of publication. Thus, the publication deadline is March 1, 2014.

The following table provides general guidelines for the revision process at the local level.

Month 1	Assign the team responsible for aligning local policy with national policy (e.g., IE Council, Regional Counsel, IEPO)
Month 2	Reconcile updates to national policy with local policy Draft revisions
Month 3	Conduct local policy concurrence process
Month 4	Obtain final approval of local policy
Month 5	Educate key stakeholders Develop action plan
Month 6	Implement action plan

How can I get more information on the IE Handbook?

National IE staff will be discussing updates to the IE Handbook on IE Improvement Forum calls. The call schedule is available at:

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

Who can I contact about the IntegratedEthics™ Handbook?

You can send questions via e-mail to vhaethics@va.gov