IntegratedEthics VISN Roles & Responsibilities

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Selecting a VISN IntegratedEthics Point of Contact

The VISN IntegratedEthics Point of Contact (VISN IE POC) has a key role in the implementation of IntegratedEthics (IE) throughout the VISN. This individual will serve as the support to the Network Director and chair of the VISN IntegratedEthics Advisory Board (IEAB) in areas related to implementation and performance in the IE roll-out. S/he will be the contact with the National Center for Ethics in Health Care and the facility based IE Program Officers and other IE staff.

Selection of the VISN IE POC is as important for program success as implementing the structures and processes for the IE Program. Some key factors should be considered:

- Turn-over in the VISN IE POC role damages program progress. The VISN IE POC should not be a trainee or administrative resident unless they are expected to fulfill this role after their training is complete.
- Ethical credibility of the VISN IE POC is essential. Not only is it a priority that s/he already be practicing ethically, the VISN IE POC should have skills that enable him or her to model and visibly demonstrate ethical behavior throughout the VISN.
- The VISN IE POC could be either a member of the VISN staff or located at a medical center. Success depends on access to the Network Director or the Network Executive Leadership Board and the chair of the VISN IEAB.
- This role would be appropriate for a Health Systems Specialist or equivalent. The individual should have a role that does not create a conflict of interest in programs they may manage. This individual should be trusted by the Network Director to speak frankly and be forthcoming with concerns and issues.
- This position may require up to .25 FTEE commitments for a successful roll-out of IE. The time commitment may be reduced in subsequent years, once the program is successfully operating.
- VISN IE POC duties are primarily administrative and focus on management of the IntegratedEthics programs across the facilities and VISN.
Core Competencies

The competencies for the VISN IE POC are consistent with VHA's High Performance Development Model and will assist you in determining who may be best suited for this role.

Interpersonal Effectiveness

The individual must be able to listen with interest, respect, support and empathy.

The individual will use their interpersonal skills to educate others regarding ethical dimensions of a situation.

The individual will be in contact with facility management and IE coordinators and should possess the ability to communicate effectively with a variety of groups.

The individual will provide staff support to the IE VISN Lead and the VISN IEAB. Activities to be performed may include taking minutes, drafting policies and preparing consultation reports; excellent writing skills are important.

Personal Mastery

The individual must be able to learn the skills necessary to lead and participate in ethics consultation. The person you select may or may not yet have experience in clinical or organizational ethics, but should have a demonstrated ability to learn how to lead small groups to accomplish complex tasks.

Systems Thinking

The individual should possess the ability to understand the dynamics of the VISN to enable strong facilitation and leadership of IE.

Creative Thinking

Creative problem solving is a necessary skill to manage the IE program and participate in VISN based ethics consultations.

Organizational Stewardship

Knowledge of the institutional values and policies of the organization is crucial for the VISN IE POC to help guide the IE programs across the VISN.

Customer Service

This individual should know how to identify stakeholders in various processes and be able to represent the views of others in IE activities.
**Flexibility**

The VISN IE POC must be able to negotiate between competing values and moral views.

As the VISN IE POC assists facilities in their implementation of IE, differences of facility culture may require flexibility to achieve cross-VISN solutions.

**Technical Skills**

*Assessment skills:* The individual must be able to access relevant data and apply analytical skills for program evaluation, consultation and assistance.

*Ethical understanding:* The individual will assist in the leadership of a program to build the organization's ethical culture. Basic knowledge of ethical principles are necessary but can be learned.

*Organizing and conducting meetings:* In providing support to the VISN IEAB, the individual will assist with development of agendas, preparation of minutes and implementation of action plans developed by the Board.
Leadership & Coordination of IntegratedEthics at the Network Level

Introduction

This document is designed to assist Network Directors, as well as the individuals they designate to serve as VISN IntegratedEthics Senior Lead and VISN IntegratedEthics Point-of-Contact (POC), to understand and carry out their responsibilities with respect to the national roll-out of IntegratedEthics (IE). Designating clear responsibility for IE-related activities within the VISN office is part of the executive commitment to IE and demonstrates support for the program goal: to improve ethics quality in VHA. These duties build upon IE structures and functions at the facility level and are designed to enhance and promote successful implementation of IE activities throughout each VISN.

Each Network Director is asked to designate two individuals for specific IE-related roles: 1) a VISN IE POC and 2) a VISN IE Senior Lead. In addition, each Network Director is asked to establish a VISN-level IntegratedEthics Advisory Board. These are described below.

VISN IntegratedEthics Point-of-Contact

The role of the VISN IE POC is to coordinate the flow of information between the facilities and the National Center for Ethics in Health Care, assist the Network Director to track facility implementation of IntegratedEthics, and educate VISN staff about the program. Typically, this will be a health system specialist or the equivalent.

No specific FTE requirement has been established for this position. However, during the first year of the program, the VISN IE POC will require protected time away from other duties in order to perform this role. The time commitment may be reduced in subsequent years, once the program is successfully operating. The VISN IE POC will most likely be a collateral duty of a qualified VISN level staff member. (Please see the Attachment “Selecting a VISN IntegratedEthics POC” for further information.)

Responsibilities

The VISN IE POC will be responsible for:

- Monitoring facility efforts to establish IntegratedEthics programs
  - Ensuring accountability for achieving implementation milestones
  - Achieving satisfactory outcomes on VISN performance monitors
  - Demonstrating improvement in ethics quality
- Facilitating communication among facility IntegratedEthics programs to enable facilities to share ethics knowledge and solutions to common ethics problems
Leadership & Coordination at the VISN Level

- Coordinating efforts among facility IntegratedEthics programs to promote consistent quality and adherence to standards
- Working with facility leadership to support program implementation
- Performing the responsibilities of the IntegratedEthics Program Officer for the staff in the Network office
- Functioning as a point of contact with the National Center for Ethics in Health Care
- With guidance and support from the VISN IE Senior Lead, managing IntegratedEthics activities undertaken at the VISN level
- Acting as the executive officer or secretary to the IntegratedEthics Advisory Board. (See Network-Level IntegratedEthics Advisory Board below.)

The VISN IE POC should report directly to the Network Director or to the Network Executive Leadership Council (ELC). The ability to report regularly to top leadership and receive necessary support is essential, especially during the early stages of this organizational change initiative. The VISN IE POC is intended to represent the VISN Director in communications with facility Directors and IE Program Officers with regards to tracking and monitoring of performance expectations for IE.

VISN IE Senior Lead

The role of the VISN Senior Lead is to provide visible leadership and executive oversight and guidance to the program at the VISN level. This individual will typically be a facility director, VISN CMO or QMO, facility COS, or other senior official within the Network. Some Network Directors may wish to fulfill this role themselves.

Responsibilities

The VISN IE Senior Lead is responsible for:

- Acting as a spokesperson and leader for the IntegratedEthics program in the VISN
- Together with the VSIN IE POC, creating awareness of and support for IntegratedEthics among Network staff and Network committees, boards and/or councils
- Reinforcing among top leaders in each facility the importance of their visible and vocal support for their facility IntegratedEthics Programs
- Providing support and advice to the VISN IE POC and overall vision and directions to the implementation of IE in the Network
- Chairing the IntegratedEthics Advisory Board.
Network-Level IntegratedEthics Advisory Board (IEAB)

The IEAB acts in a systematic fashion to handle ethics questions and ethics quality gaps that are raised at the Network level and/or that cross facility boundaries. It provides an infrastructure for identification, prioritization and responses to these ethical concerns. This analysis and advice supports ethical decision making at the Network level.

Membership in the Network-Level IEAB should include the IE Program Officer from each facility, representatives from each of the three “core functions” of the IE program. It should also include representatives of various areas that contribute to the VISNs ethics culture and environment, for example:

- Compliance and Business Integrity
- Contracting/Procurement/Logistics
- Finance/Business
- Medical Care Cost Recovery
- Human Resources
- Research Compliance
- Equal Employment Opportunity
- Quality Management
- Regional Counsel
- Patient Advocate
- Privacy Officer
- Union representative
- Information Security VSO

The IEAB should complement the work of the IntegratedEthics Councils, which oversee and coordinate IE-related activities at the facility level. The roles and responsibilities of the facility-level IntegratedEthics Council is described in detail in the Ethical Leadership Toolkit. This document may also be helpful in developing the Network-level IEAB.
**VISN Integrated Ethics Point-of-Contact: Roles and Responsibilities**

**Role and Responsibilities of the VISN IE POC**

The aim of an IntegratedEthics program at the Network level is to improve ethics quality by improving three core functions—ethics consultation, preventive ethics, and ethical leadership—and integrating them into the daily operations of health care by applying them to areas selected by the VISN. As the VISN IE POC, you will manage the day-to-day operations of the program at the Network level, monitor facility activities to ensure accountability for implementation and achievement of VISN performance monitors, facilitate communication among facility programs so as to share knowledge and solutions to common problems, and support consistency in quality between facility ethics programs. You will also serve as the liaison between the facility IntegratedEthics program officers and the VISN and between the VISN and the National Center for Ethics in Health Care. Your essential responsibility is to coordinate, communicate and monitor.

Broadly, the VISN IE POC is responsible for the following:

1. **Demonstrate a Working Knowledge of the IntegratedEthics Approach**

   The toolkit provided to the VISN IE POC and the IE Program Officer at each facility contains the information needed to understand the IntegratedEthics Program. The toolkit contains:

   - An overview of IntegratedEthics
   - Descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of:
     - the facility IE PO and VISN IE POC
     - the facility IntegratedEthics Council
     - the three core functions
   - The IntegratedEthics first-year timeline to help monitor tasks and activities
   - Information about the IntegratedEthics global assessment tools (Facility Workbook and Staff Survey)
   - Information about other IntegratedEthics resources, including communications materials and online learning modules on ethics in health care.

2. **Coordinate IntegratedEthics across the VISN**

   As the point of contact for the Network’s IntegratedEthics program, you’ll support and advise the program officer in each facility. You’ll implement the VISN IEAB to enable identification, prioritization, and tracking of responses to cross-facility or Network-level ethics concerns. You’ll manage communications in the VISN about IntegratedEthics and facilitate communication among facility programs. You will also act as the facilitator for your VISN colleagues as they seek advice and subject matter expertise around ethics consultation, preventive ethics, and ethical leadership.
3. Connect facility IntegratedEthics programs to each other

As the VISN IE POC, your role is to help facility IE programs to connect with and learn from each other so that the IE vision can be achieved across your Network. To do so, you should obtain regular updates about the activities of the IE Council and three core functions in each facility. You will be responsible for handling requests for assistance or guidance from facilities and, where appropriate, direct them to appropriate decision making bodies/decision makers at the VISN level or to the National Center for Ethics in Health Care (or receive assistance from the Network Director and ELC to do so). You will also be a resource to the facility IE program officers as they carry out their activities, and help the facilities to troubleshoot problems or create cross-facility mentorship opportunities between facilities with more and less robust ethics programs.

4. Ensure Integration

You will be responsible for building on existing strengths to promote integration of IntegratedEthics concepts into activities that occur within the Network structure. You’ll also need to establish effective communication and relationships between the IntegratedEthics programs in each facility and other programs, offices, and leaders throughout the Network. The IEAB is one of your principal mechanisms to help promote integration at the VISN level.

5. Build Visibility and Support for IntegratedEthics

Together with the VISN Senior Lead, you’ll be responsible for creating awareness of and support for IntegratedEthics among Network staff and Network committees, boards and/or councils. You will also reinforce for top leaders in each facility the importance of their visible and vocal support for their facility IntegratedEthics Programs.

6. Serve as the VISN “IE Program Officer”

You are responsible for ensuring that VISN staff receives education about IntegratedEthics and ethics in health care. The communications tools, Introduction to IE video, and Power Point slides included in the toolkit were developed to inform employees at all levels of the organization about IntegratedEthics. The IntegratedEthics online learning modules are case based training tools for individual study that introduce basic concepts and identify common misconceptions about ethics in health care.

7. Support IE Roll-Out at Facilities

Your role is to support IE program roll-out by helping facilities to meet implementation milestones such as:

- Development of their IE Councils
- Development of IE and other ethics policies
- Addressing accreditation standards related to ethics of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) and maintaining continuous readiness
- Development of a plan to educate staff about IntegratedEthics and ethics in health care
Your monitoring and support role could include circulating local IE policies or communicating good practices that were identified during JCAHO or other reviews. Additionally, you could facilitate education efforts between facilities so that, for example, facilities with fewer educational resources might be able to benefit from educational programs or presentations that are being undertaken in other Network facilities.

8. Monitor Use of Assessments

You’ll monitor the facilities’ efforts to assess the status of their ethics programs. Through the global assessment tools (Facility Workbook and Staff Survey) you will have access to data from each facility such as the level of knowledge about ethics in health care and perceptions about local ethics practices at each facility. Each facility IE Program Officer is responsible for using the tools and developing plans in response to ethics quality gaps that are identified. Also, ethics programs are responsible for implementing the Ethical Leadership Self-Assessment Tool, the Ethics Consultation Feedback Tool and the Ethics Consultation Proficiency Assessment Tool to provide ongoing assessments of the quality and effectiveness of their IE program. You may wish to review the plans and progress of each facility’s efforts to institute continuous assessment and program improvements.

9. Monitor Achievement of Implementation Milestones and Long-Term Performance

A key part of your role is to monitor the performance of the IE programs in each facility. You should set up regular reporting mechanisms to track whether and how well facility leaders are fulfilling their responsibilities to implement IE locally, including achievement of implementation milestones and completion of program assessments such as the Staff Survey and Facility Workbook. You should report combined performance to the Network Director and ELC. You should track and provide feedback to facilities on achievement of implementation of milestones. You will be responsible for reporting combined VISN performance in IE to the Chief Network Office (10N) and to the National Center for Ethics in Health Care.

10. Connect Externally

You’ll be the liaison for your VISN to the National Center for Ethics in Health Care. In this role, you’ll provide information about your Network’s achievements and success in meeting milestones such as completion of global assessment tools. You’ll also share information with the Ethics Center and other bodies about your program’s activities, strong practices, and lessons learned to help inform national program improvements. You’ll share your experiences nationally through teleconferences, the IntegratedEthics website vaww.va.gov/IntegratedEthics, participation on special workgroups, and responses to formal evaluations from the Ethics Center.

On the following pages, you’ll find a timeline and brief descriptions of the specific tasks associated with the responsibilities of the VISN IE POC.
Description of Tasks

Study the IE Toolkit. Reading the IntegratedEthics communications materials is an important first step in ensuring that you understand the broad concepts and aims of IntegratedEthics. In addition, it’s crucial to read each of the three primers carefully—Ethics Consultation: Responding to Ethics Questions in Health Care; Preventive Ethics: Addressing Ethics Quality Gaps on a Systems Level; and Ethical Leadership: Fostering an Ethical Environment & Culture. You’ll return to these documents often as you coordinate and support the establishment of IntegratedEthics programs in your Network.

Complete EC, PE, and EL Video Courses. You should take each of the video courses. The EC and PE course should be taken once you’ve read the primers. The EL video should be completed before you read the primer. These courses walk you through important aspects of each of the functions.

Meet with facility IE Program Officers. You should meet with the facility IE Program Officers to answer questions, set a routine meeting schedule, and establish a way to receive periodic updates as needed. The important aspect of this task is to open dialogue and build a good working relationship among the individuals who are most important to the program’s success. You should maintain an up to date listing of which individuals have been designated as the coordinators for each function at each facility.

Develop the Network IE Advisory Board (IEAB). Establishing a Network IEAB has been found to be an effective means to ensure Network-wide roll-out of IE, to support the development of a culture of IntegratedEthics across the Network, to assist facilities as they develop IE Programs and respond to ethics cases and issues that cross facility boundaries or that require Network-level consideration.

To establish a Network IEAB, you should begin by including all of your facility IE Program Officers and stakeholders and determining whether you have representation from all areas that have a role in the ethical culture of the organization. This might include but not be limited to compliance and business integrity, finance/business, human resources, equal employment opportunity, regional counsel, privacy officer, information security, contracting/procurement, research, union or Veteran Service Officer representation. Your IE Program Officers already represent some of these areas or you may need to name additional members.

With membership determined, you should have an open dialogue with the group to establish and prioritize the goals for the Network-level IEAB. Goals could include supporting facility roll-out of IE, monitoring the status of implementation across facilities, responding to requests for ethics consultation from Network leadership, responding to cross-facility ethics issues using preventive ethics approaches, and so on. In particular, the group should establish a system for ensuring that cross-facility issues are brought to the attention of the board and that actions are taken to address the issues. Finally, you should formalize the mechanism through which the IEAB will regularly report to Network leadership on its activities.

You will want to consider how to keep the importance of the IE initiative “front and center” for facility top leadership and thereby encourage them to visibly support the
IE initiative. For example, you might include an update on the IE initiative at regular Network-wide meetings with facility directors and other facility leaders.

**Perform responsibilities as the VISN level IE Program Officer.** Development of a communications strategy to assure Network staff is aware of IntegratedEthics is critical. Through “lunch and learn” sessions, an “ethics bite of the day” during regular meetings or other approaches, you can help Network staff to understand the IE initiative. You may also want to distribute some or all of the communications materials provided in the toolkit. It’s your responsibility to keep the lines of communication open through periodic updates on program happenings and successes.

**Register with the national IntegratedEthics website.** The IntegratedEthics website (vaww.ethics.va.gov/IntegratedEthics) is designed to support continuous learning among VA’s IntegratedEthics community. The site contains all the materials in the IntegratedEthics toolkits (including the video courses), links to online learning modules, and many other resources and tools. It will be updated regularly.

**Participate in IE teleconferences.** The goal of these conference calls is to provide a problem-solving, solution-sharing forum for the implementation of IntegratedEthics. Ethics Center staff will moderate the teleconferences and focus on the needs of the attendees. The content of the calls may include discussion of common problems, sharing best practices, or a question and answer session with a content expert.

**Monitor facility-level activities.** Your role is to support facilities to complete their responsibilities related to program implementation, policy development, accreditation readiness, facility staff education and use of assessment tools as described in the IE Program Officer activities descriptions. You should help facilities trouble-shoot local problems and, if required, bring problems to the attention of the Network Leadership.
## Timeline

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<td>Complete EC, PE, and EL video course (M 2 &amp; 3)</td>
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<td>Meet with facility Program Officers (M 2)</td>
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<td><strong>Engage with the National IE Community</strong></td>
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<td>Register with the national IntegratedEthics website (M 1)</td>
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<td>Participate in IE teleconferences (M 3 thru 12)</td>
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<td>Establish VISN EAB (M 4)</td>
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<td>Develop VISN level policies on IE (M11)</td>
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<td>Develop educational and communications strategy for VISN staff (M 5)</td>
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<td>Roll out “Ethics in Health Care” (M 6)</td>
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<td>Roll out IE online learning modules (M 7 thru 9)</td>
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<td>Ensure assignment of facility positions (M 1)</td>
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<td>Monitor participation in IE Staff Survey (M 5)</td>
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<td>Report monitor/measure result quarterly (M 8 &amp; 12)</td>
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<td>Evaluate Facility Workbooks for VISN level findings (M 6 thru 9)</td>
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<td>Utilize IE Staff Survey results to identify VISN level needs (M 12)</td>
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<td>Assist with development of facility-based polices on IE (M12)</td>
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