Links to Online Materials of the IntegratedEthics Program, Department of Veterans Affairs

Ethical Leadership Primer: Fostering an Ethical Environment and Culture: This 60-page core IntegratedEthics document offers practical suggestions for how leaders can support ethical practices in their organizations. Targeted to VA leaders at the executive and mid-manager levels, it explains the role leaders play in creating and sustaining an ethical culture in health care organizations, critical factors for success, and specific behaviors leaders use to foster an ethical environment and culture.

http://www.ethics.va.gov/docs/integratedethics/Ethical_Leadership_Fostering_an_Ethical_Environment_and_Culture_20070808.pdf

Ethical Leadership Self-Assessment Tool (ELSA): Designed to be used in conjunction with the Ethical Leadership Primer, the tool challenges leaders to think about their own leadership behaviors, and suggests behaviors and skills they may want to develop. In this way, it helps leaders identify areas where they are successfully modeling behaviors that foster an ethical environment and culture, and highlight opportunities for improvement.

http://www.ethics.va.gov/docs/integratedethics/Ethical_Leadership_Self-Assessment_Tool-fillable_form-20070222.doc

Ethics Consultation Flyer: This flyer serves to inform health care communities, including patients, families, and staff, about the facility Ethics Consultation Service. By posing the question: “I'm just not sure…What is the right thing to do?” the flyer affirms that health care decisions can be difficult, describes how ethics consultation can help people clarify their choices, and provides contact information.

http://www.ethics.va.gov/integratedethics/ecc.asp

IntegratedEthics Definition of Ethics Quality: This one-page article briefly describes how the IntegratedEthics model defines ethics quality in health care and introduces the “IntegratedEthics iceberg” that illustrates how ethical practices cut across three levels of ethics quality.

http://www.ethics.va.gov/docs/integratedethics/2013130_what_is_ethics_qual_art.pdf

National Center for Ethics in Health Care: Founded in 1991, the National Center for Ethics in Health Care (NCEHC) supports clinical ethics, organizational ethics, and research ethics across VHA. Its multidisciplinary staff representing medicine, nursing, philosophy, law, policymaking, and other fields provides analysis and guidance on controversial ethics issues affecting patients, providers, health care managers, and health policymakers. After engaging in a rigorous consensus-building process, the NCEHC developed IntegratedEthics, which has been implemented in all of VA’s 140 integrated health care facilities and 21 regional networks since 2008.

www.ethics.va.gov/integratedethics
Triage Tool for Ethics-Related Leadership Decisions: While many leadership decisions relate to ethics, only some present true ethical dilemmas, where there is uncertainty or conflict about values. This tool helps leaders determine what type of ethics-related leadership decision needs to be made and useful resources (including the Ethical Leadership Quality Check) for providing strong ethical justifications for those decisions.


Decision Exercise: Triage Tool for Ethics-Related Leadership Decisions: With the help of real-life examples, leaders can practice using the Triage Tool individually or in groups to classify ethical decisions and determine the process, individual, mechanism, or service best suited to address them. An answer key providing rationales for each example is included.

http://www.ethics.va.gov/docs/integratedethics/el_decision_exercise_triage_tool_qa_2013516.pdf

VA’s “I CARE” Core Values: The values, Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence (I CARE), apply across the entire VA organization and play a critical role to support VA’s commitment to care and serve Veterans, their families, and beneficiaries.

http://www.va.gov/icare
VA is committed to excellence in health care, and quality is an essential component of that excellence. However, there are different types of quality. Technical quality (for example, a surgery that was performed well) and service quality (a patient who was satisfied with the care received) are important—but not enough. For the achievement of true excellence, ethics quality is also indispensable.

In general terms, ethics quality means that clinical and administrative practices are consistent with accepted ethics standards, norms or expectations for the conduct of a health care organization and its staff. In VA, it means that these practices align with VA’s commitment to patient-centered care, which enables our patients to make voluntary and well-informed health care choices. Ethics quality also means employees find it easier and more encouraging to “do the right thing.”

Graph 1: Strength of Association (correlation coefficient)* between Organizational Health Factors and Overall Rating of Facility as an Ethical Organization (IESS D1).

*Correlation Coefficient is a measure of the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. The bigger the bar above, the bigger the positive relationship between the items listed and survey respondents’ overall rating of their organization as ethical.

Ethics quality contributes significantly to the health of any organization, and VA is no exception. Data from the 2012 Voice of VA Integrated Ethics Staff Survey (IESS) (see Graph 1) show links between employee perceptions of their organization as ethical and indicators of patient care quality and organizational health. Notably, higher perceptions of the organization’s ethical environment are correlated with better patient satisfaction on the Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients (SHEP) survey, fewer sick leave hours and less nursing turnover. Positive perceptions of the ethical environment are also associated with better scores on VA’s All Employee Survey (AES), including higher levels of psychological safety, greater overall satisfaction and lower levels of employee burnout.

Specific leadership behaviors, such as whether or not senior managers communicate that ethics is a priority; follow up on ethical concerns; and do not tolerate retaliation for reporting ethics concerns; and whether employees believe they are treated fairly, influence whether staff perceive the organization as ethical (see Graph 2).

Importantly, leaders may be highly ethical, but may not be perceived that way by others. Leaders who are “ethically silent,” and who do not publically and regularly demonstrate a commitment to ethics, can leave staff believing that ethics is not as important as other organizational priorities. On ethics, leaders need to lead from the top, just as they do on other VA strategic goals.

To support an organizational commitment to ethics, VHA Integrated Ethics (IE) program staff have, at regular intervals since 2008, reviewed IESS data to identify ethics quality deficits, particularly around...
Ethics quality
... continued from page 4

ethical leadership practices. Using IE tools and local ingenuity, they undertook more than 400 quality improvement activities to foster leadership behaviors supporting an ethical environment and culture in VHA:

- Prioritizing “doing the right thing” over “getting to green” in performance goals;
- Making organizational processes (e.g., hiring committees, leadership decision-making) more equitable by reducing the influence of personal relationships; and
- Ensuring that employees feel safe and encouraged and do not fear retaliation when they bring forward potential ethical concerns.

Overall, these projects seek to make it easy for all employees to take actions consistent with VA CARE core values.

Leaders and supervisors throughout VA who wish to assess whether their own behaviors support an ethical environment and culture can use these IE tools:

- An informational primer and video explaining ethical leadership concepts
- The Ethical Leadership Self-Assessment Tool, which leaders can use to assess and make action plans to improve specific ethical leadership behaviors;
- Tools to spark discussion of how VA CARE core values apply in the workplace and to open the space to bring forward ethical concerns;
- Quick (15 minute) activities that can be used to build ethical leadership skills;
- A checklist to support ethical leadership improvement project design.

All staff can use the “Talk about Ethics” tool, which suggests ways staff can help bridge conversations about ethics.

To achieve ethics quality and build healthy organizations, all VA staff must bring organizational values into their work each day. In turn, leaders must model ethical leadership excellence. By creating a tone of ethical leadership at the top and empowering staff in an ethical culture to consider ethics in everyday decisions, we can achieve this goal.

**Graph 2: Strength of Influence (effect size)* of Ethical Leadership Practices on Overall Rating of Facility as an Ethical Organization (IESS D1).**

*Effect size provides the estimated magnitude of a relationship between a set of items and an outcome.

---

1. Demonstrate that ethics is a priority
   - Talk about ethics (M3)
   - Prove that ethics matters to you (W2, W3)
   - Encourage discussion of ethical concerns (W4, M1, M2, M5)

2. Communicate clear expectations for ethical practice
   - Recognize when expectations need to be clarified (M4)
   - Be explicit, give examples, explain the underlying values
   - Anticipate barriers to meeting your expectations

3. Practice ethical decision making
   - Identify decisions that raise ethical concerns
   - Address ethical decisions systematically
   - Explain your decisions (RA2, RA3)

4. Support your local ethics program
   - Know what your program is and what it does
   - Champion the program (W6)
   - Support participation by others (W6)
Ethical Leadership Self-Assessment Tool

About this self-assessment tool

This self-assessment tool is designed to be used in conjunction with the ethical leadership video and primer, Ethical Leadership: Fostering an Ethical Environment & Culture. The tool will help you identify areas in which you're successfully modeling behaviors that foster an ethical environment and culture, as well as highlight opportunities for improvement. It’s designed for leaders at the senior executive and mid-manager (division/department/service line manager) levels as defined in VA’s High Performance Development Model (HPDM). For more information about the competencies for each level, please see the “Competency Definitions” (http://vaww.va.gov/hpdm/pdf/corecompetencydefinitions.pdf).

How to use the tool

This tool will challenge you to think about your own leadership behaviors. Each question suggests a behavior or skill you may wish to develop. Each leader’s situation is unique—think about your local situation and whether increasing your use of the behavior or skill could improve your leadership practice and thereby your local ethical environment. There are no right or wrong answers. For this reason, no mechanism is provided to enable you to calculate an overall score or compare your responses to those of other leaders.

After you complete the tool

Immediately following the self-assessment questions, you’ll find an action plan. Use it to identify opportunities to improve your leadership practice and local ethical environment and culture.

Ethical Leadership Self-Assessment

Please check one answer for each of the following items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Demonstrate that ethics is a priority</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I tell my staff to make ethics a priority.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use examples or stories from my facility or my experience to illustrate the importance of ethics.</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>I initiate discussions of ethical concerns.</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>In a typical day, I think about ethical issues.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>I demonstrate that I am sensitive to ethical issues in my everyday work.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I object when someone seems to be ignoring, avoiding, or smoothing over an important ethical issue.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section I–Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I explicitly acknowledge staff contributions to promoting ethical practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I include specific expectations for ethical practice in staff performance plans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I hold my staff accountable for meeting high ethical standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In conversations with staff, I invite comments about ethical concerns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When staff members raise an ethical concern, I thank them for sharing the concern.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When staff members raise an ethical concern, I ask them to say more.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I encourage discussion of conflicting values related to organizational decisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I create opportunities for staff discussion of ethics topics.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### II. Communicate Clear Expectations for Ethical Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I make a conscious effort to serve as a role model for ethical practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I clearly communicate my expectations for ethical practice to my staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I communicate my expectations for ethical practice, I explain the values that underlie those expectations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I communicate my expectations for ethical practice, I use examples that illustrate what I mean.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I communicate my expectations for ethical practice, I make sure those expectations are realistic and achievable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I communicate my expectations for ethical practice, I make a point to address obstacles that staff might encounter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When staff members receive “mixed messages” that create ethical tensions, I take responsibility for clarifying my expectations for ethical practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I encourage staff to talk to me if they feel pressured to “bend the rules.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### III. Practice ethical decision making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I explicitly consider ethical issues when making management decisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use a standardized process to make decisions on management issues with ethical implications.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When faced with a tough decision, I look to VHA mission and values statements (or similar documents) and use them to evaluate various options.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When faced with a tough decision, I think through the short-term and long-term effects on various individuals and groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When faced with a tough decision, I make sure that I am not unfairly favoring a particular individual or group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I need advice on an ethical issue, I go to a person with ethics expertise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I need advice on an ethical issue, I refer to published sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>When making important decisions, I involve those who will be most affected.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When important decisions are made by a group, I ensure that someone is specifically tasked to call attention to ethical considerations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I announce important decisions to staff, I take time to explain the decision-making process and who was involved.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I announce important decisions to staff, I take the time to explain the rationale for the decision.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
IV. Support your local ethics program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I talk to staff in my facility about how the ethics program works, including:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- ethics consultation</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>- preventive ethics</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>- ethical leadership</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- compliance and business integrity</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- research compliance and assurance</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- government ethics</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I receive and review updates about local ethics program activities.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek help from the local ethics program.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I act to ensure that local ethics activities are adequately funded.</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I act to ensure that local ethics activities are adequately staffed.</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I inform my staff about current local ethics program activities.</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I highlight successes in local ethics program activities for staff.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage my staff to use the local ethics program when they have an ethical concern.</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Action Plan

Once you have completed the self-assessment questions, complete this action plan to identify opportunities for improvement, taking into account your organizational role. To monitor your progress, repeat this exercise yearly to help you assess whether you have achieved your improvement objectives.

Steps:

1. Based on your responses, choose one action in each of the four points of the Ethical Leadership compass (section I, II, III, or IV) to focus on this year.
2. Within this area, identify several concrete steps you will take to demonstrate your ethical leadership and thereby improve your facility’s ethical environment.

Example:

<p>| Ethical Leadership Compass III. Practice ethical decision making |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Leadership Action</th>
<th>Current Frequency</th>
<th>Goal Frequency</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I explicitly consider ethical issues when making management decisions. | Almost Never | Frequently | • Change format for executive decision memorandum (EDM) to include reference to ethics (e.g., just as document references financial considerations, it should reference ethical considerations).
• Ask myself “Are there ethical issues in this decision?” for at least three management decisions per week for which an EDM is not used. |
### Ethical Leadership Compass I. Demonstrate that ethics is a priority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Leadership Action</th>
<th>Current Frequency</th>
<th>Goal Frequency</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

### Ethical Leadership Compass II. Communicate clear expectations for ethical practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Leadership Action</th>
<th>Current Frequency</th>
<th>Goal Frequency</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

### Ethical Leadership Compass III. Practice ethical decision making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Leadership Action</th>
<th>Current Frequency</th>
<th>Goal Frequency</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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</table>

### Ethical Leadership Compass IV. Support your local ethics program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Leadership Action</th>
<th>Current Frequency</th>
<th>Goal Frequency</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Leadership Behaviors and the Organization’s Ethical Environment Activity

The goal of the activity is to identify specific leadership behaviors that can have a positive or negative effect on the organization’s ethical environment and culture, and to reinforce the fact that leaders do serve as exemplars for how ethics considerations will be incorporated into the day-to-day operations of their organizations.

Instructions

1. Think of 2 leaders within your organization—one who models good ethical leadership practices, and 1 who models poor ethical leadership practices. This handout contains excerpts from the 4 compass points. They detail specific good ethical leadership practices emphasized in the IntegratedEthics program.

2. In the first column, place check marks next to those practices that your positive role model has used in the course of daily work. In the second column, place checks marks next to the practices that your negative role model has not used.

3. Consider which practice you would like to improve upon or develop more fully within yourself, and place a check mark in the third column next to that action behavior/characteristic.

4. Ask the person next to you, “What would you recommend that will help me hold my staff accountable for meeting high ethical standards?” (Or respond to their question with 2 or 3 specific actions.) Record your answers on the third page.

5. After a minute, switch roles, and repeat process with others as time allows.
### Excerpts from the Ethical Leadership Self-Assessment Tool (ELSA)

#### Compass Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Demonstrate that ethics is a priority</th>
<th>Leader that modeled good ethical leadership practices used these actions</th>
<th>Leader that modeled poor ethical leadership practices did not use these actions</th>
<th>I would like more practice in this area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use examples or stories from my facility or my experience to illustrate the importance of ethics.</td>
<td>(Check all that apply)</td>
<td>(Check all that apply)</td>
<td>(Check one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold staff accountable for meeting high ethical standards.</td>
<td>(Check all that apply)</td>
<td>(Check all that apply)</td>
<td>(Check one)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### II. Communicate clear expectations for ethical practice.

| Make a conscious effort to serve as a role model for ethical practice. | (Check all that apply)                                                  | (Check all that apply)                                                      | (Check one)                            |
| Encourage staff to talk to me if they feel pressured to “bend the rules.” | (Check all that apply)                                                  | (Check all that apply)                                                      | (Check one)                            |

#### III. Practice ethical decision making

| When I need advice on an ethical issue, I go to a person with ethics expertise. | (Check all that apply)                                                  | (Check all that apply)                                                      | (Check one)                            |
| When making important decisions, involve those who will be most affected. | (Check all that apply)                                                  | (Check all that apply)                                                      | (Check one)                            |

#### IV. Support your local ethics program

<p>| Seek help from the local ethics program. | (Check all that apply)                                                  | (Check all that apply)                                                      | (Check one)                            |
| Inform staff about current local ethics program activities. | (Check all that apply)                                                  | (Check all that apply)                                                      | (Check one)                            |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Specific Actions to Support Achievement of Desired Leadership Behavior:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Person 1:**
1. _________________________________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________________________

**Person 2:**
1. _________________________________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________________________

**Person 3:**
1. _________________________________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________________________

**Person 4:**
1. _________________________________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________________________
Communicate clear expectations for ethical practice

- Recognize when expectations need to be clarified
- Be explicit, give examples, explain the underlying values
- Anticipate barriers to meeting your expectations
IntegratedEthics Compass Point 2:
Communicate clear expectations for ethical practice

LEADERSHIP EXERCISE

Introduction
The second compass point of ethical leadership is communicating clear expectations for ethical practice. To do this, it’s important to:

1. Make expectations explicit: Specify under what specific circumstances you should do or not do something; describe the standard as simply as possible.
2. Give examples: Present a real-life situation listeners can identify with and imagine themselves being uncertain about the right thing to do.
3. Explain the underlying values: Give not just a buzzword but a real, compelling and principled explanation of why you should do this.
4. Anticipate barriers: At a minimum, tell people what to do if they have problems. Even better, anticipate the specific problems they might have in trying to follow this directive. Communicate that you understand what the challenges are going to be.

Instructions
1. Break into groups of 4 to 5.
2. Read the memo on the second page of this handout titled “Safeguarding Removable Media.”
3. Draft a script for a presentation to your staff that gives explicit expectations, offers specific examples, explains the underlying values, and anticipates/addresses barriers. Remember: this is a script; you are not rewriting the memo.
Date: Somemonth 12, 2007
From: VA Chief Information Officer
Subj: IT Directive 06-06, Safeguarding Removable Media
To: Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials

1. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to protecting sensitive information, including personal data of Veterans, dependents, and employees. It is imperative that encryption protection extend to all data formats and media, including USB thumb drives. This memorandum reminds you of the vulnerabilities associated with USB thumb drives and requires you to ensure all employees, contractors, and other information systems users only use VA-approved and -encrypted USB thumb drives with VA information systems.

2. VA Director 6504, Restrictions on Transmission, Transportation and Use of, and Access to VA Data Outside VA Facilities dated June 7, 2006, requires protection for sensitive data residing outside VA facilities on electronic storage media. Paragraph 2q of this Directive states:

Data stored—Encryption. Additional security controls are required to guard VA-protected information stored on computers used outside VA facilities. If an employee uses VA government-furnished equipment or non-VA other equipment in a mobile environment (e.g., laptop or PDA) carried out of a VA office or a PC in an alternative worksite and VA-protected information is stored on the computer, file, or electronic storage media, approved encryption software must be used.

3. Therefore, to maximally protect ALL INFORMATION within VA, personal USB thumb drives may no longer be used within VA facilities. Only VA-owned and -encrypted thumb drives may be used with VA equipment. The IT staff will be altering all VA computers so that unencrypted thumb drives will no longer be compatible with VA computers. You are responsible for ensuring that your staff is aware of and complies with this memorandum. You have 60 days from the date of this memorandum to ensure 100% compliance.

Mr. Data Chief

VA Form 2105
Nov 2013

IntegratedEthics
Improving Ethics Quality in Health Care
Definitions of Values

Partially excerpted from: http://www.ethics.org/resources/definitions-of-values.asp

Acceptance: Favorable reception or belief in something
Accomplishment: Doing or finishing something successfully
Accountability: Obligation or willingness to accept responsibility
Adaptability: The ability to modify behavior to fit changing situations
Allegiance: Loyalty or the obligation of loyalty
Altruism: Unselfish concern for the welfare of others
Appreciation: Recognizing the quality, value or significance of people and things
Aspiration: A strong or persistent desire for high achievement
Authenticity: The quality or condition of being trustworthy or genuine
Autonomy: The condition or quality of being independent
Benevolence: An inclination to perform kind, charitable acts
Camaraderie: Goodwill and lighthearted rapport between or among friends
Caring: Feeling and exhibiting concern and empathy for others
Charity: Generosity toward others or toward humanity
Citizenship: Exercising the duties, rights, and privileges of being a citizen
Clear thinking: Acting intelligently without mental confusion
Collaboration: To work cooperatively especially in a joint intellectual effort
Commitment: Being bound emotionally or intellectually to a course of action or to another person or persons
Community: Sharing, participation, and fellowship with others
Compassion: Deep awareness of the suffering of others coupled with the wish to relieve it
Competence: The state or quality of being adequately or well qualified
Composure: Maintaining a tranquil or calm state of mind
Concern: Regard for or interest in someone or something
Confidentiality: ensuring that information is accessible only to those authorized to have access
Conscientiousness: The trait of being painstaking and careful
Consideration: Process of employing continuous, careful thought and examination
Consistency: Reliability or uniformity of successive results or events
Constancy: Steadfastness in purpose
Cooperation: The willing association and interaction of a group of people to accomplish a goal
Courage: The state or quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face danger, fear, or vicissitudes with confidence and resolution
Courteous: Civility; consideration for others
Credibility: The quality or power to elicit belief
Decency: Conformity to prevailing standards of propriety or modesty
Dedication: Selfless devotion of energy or time
Democracy: The principles of social equality and respect for the individual within a community
Dependability: The trait of being reliable
Diversity: A point of respect in which things differ; variety
Duty: A moral or legal obligation
Efficiency: The quality of producing an effect or result with a reasonable degree of effort to energy expended
Empathy: Identification with and understanding of another’s situation, feelings, and motives.
Equality: The right of different groups of people to receive the same treatment
Equity/Equitable: The state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair
Ethics: The way people behave based on how their beliefs about what is right and wrong influence behavior
Excellence: the state of being good to a high degree
Fairness: Consistent with rules, logic, or ethics
Faithfulness: Adhering firmly and devotedly to someone or something that elicits or demands one’s fidelity
Fidelity: Faithfulness; loyalty or devotion
Forgiveness: The willingness to stop blaming or being angry with someone
Fortitude: The strength or firmness of mind that enables a person to face danger, pain or despondency with stoic resolve
Generosity: liberality in giving or willingness to give
Genuine: not spurious or counterfeit
Giving: voluntarily transferring knowledge or property without receiving value in return
Goodness: morally right, or admirable because of kind, thoughtful, or honest behavior
Goodwill: friendly attitude in which you wish that good things happen to people
Gratitude: feeling of thankfulness and appreciation
Helpfulness: the property of providing useful assistance or friendliness evidence by a kindly and helpful disposition
Honesty: Fairness and straightforwardness of conduct
Honor: Principled uprightness of character; personal integrity
Hope: The feeling that something desired can be had or will happen
Humility: Feeling that you have no special importance that makes you better than others
Ingenuity: Inventive skill or imagination
Initiative: Ability to begin or to follow through energetically with a plan or task
Integrity: Strict adherence to moral values and principles
Justice: Conformity to moral rightness in action or attitude, distributing goods and treatment fairly and equitably
Kindness: The quality or state of being beneficent
Liberty: The right and power to act, believe, or express oneself in a manner of one’s own choosing.
Loyalty: A feeling or attitude of devotion, attachment and affection.
Mercy: Forgiveness shown toward someone whom you have the power to punish
Moderation: Having neither too little nor too much of anything
Morals: Individual beliefs about what is right and wrong
Nonmaleficence: doing no intentional harm
Obedience: Compliance with that which is required; subjection to rightful restraint or control.
Openness: the free expression of one’s true feelings and opinions
Opportunity: Favorable or advantageous circumstance or combination of circumstances
Optimism: A bright, hopeful view and expectation of the best possible outcome
Patience: The ability to accept delay, suffering, or annoyance without complaint or anger
Perseverance: Steady persistence in adhering to a course of action, a belief, or a purpose
Promise-keeping: Keeping your word that that you will certainly do something
Prudence: Doing something right because it is the right thing to do
Purity: Moral goodness
Reason: The ability to think and make good judgments
Recognition: An acceptance as true or valid
Reconciliation: Enabling two people or groups adjust the way they think about divergent ideas or positions so they can accept both
Reliability: Consistent performance upon which you can depend or trust
Repentance: Remorse or contrition for past conduct
Resilience: The ability to rebound quickly from misfortune or change

Resourcefulness: The ability to act effectively or imaginatively, especially in difficult situations

Respect: Polite attitude shown toward someone or something that you consider important

Responsibility: That for which someone is responsible or answerable

Sacrifice: To give up something for something else considered more important

Self-control: Control of personal emotions, desires, or actions by one’s own will

Self-discipline: Making yourself do things when you should, even if you do not want to do them

Sensitivity: Awareness of the needs and emotions of others

Serenity: Calmness of mind and evenness of temper

Sharing: To allow others to participate in, use, enjoy, or experience jointly or in turns

Sincerity: Genuineness, honesty, and freedom from duplicity

Sobriety: Habitual freedom from inordinate passion or overheated imagination; calmness; coolness; seriousness

Stewardship: The careful conducting, supervising, or managing of something

Supportive: Furnishing support or assistance

Thoughtfulness: The tendency to anticipate needs or wishes

Tolerance: Recognizing and respecting the beliefs or practices of others

Transparency: Openness, communication, and accountability in interpersonal and business interactions

Trust: Assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something

Trustworthiness: The trait of deserving confidence

Truth-telling: Telling the truth as opposed to lying

Understanding: Knowing how something works or a positive, truthful relationship between people

Values: Core beliefs that guide and motivate attitudes and actions

Virtue: Doing something right because it is the good thing to do

Wisdom: The ability to make good judgments based on what you have learned from your experience

Values Cases

Values Case 1

A 63-year-old Veteran with a history of mental health problems requests a second vasectomy reversal. He has had trouble supporting the children from his first two marriages, but his third wife would like to have children.

Values Case 2

A 40-year-old male Veteran is seen in the outpatient clinic for a minor skin problem. During the visit, the Veteran's wife tells the nurse that she is worried because her husband is planning to seduce a friend of the family—a 16-year-old girl. She is concerned about the child and asks that the medical team report her husband to the appropriate authorities.

Instructions

1. Read Values Case 1. Taking no more than a minute, decide as a group whether or not VA should perform the vasectomy reversal.
2. Decide what values should be considered in the decision.
3. Take 7 to 8 minutes to develop, as a group, a few sentences that make an argument for the values-based position of the other position (the one the group did not select). Don't just use labels; use inspirational and compelling language.
4. Read Values Case 2, and repeat the instructions.
Quality Check

To check the quality of your ethical decision-making process, ask yourself these questions:

- Do I have all the important facts relevant to the decision?

- Have I involved everyone who should be part of this decision?

- Does this decision reflect organizational, professional, and social values?

- Do the likely benefits of the decision outweigh any potential harms?

- Will this decision keep the problem from recurring or establish a good precedent?

- How would this decision look to someone outside the organization?
TRIAGE TOOL FOR ETHICS-RELATED LEADERSHIP DECISIONS

Ethics-related leadership decision needs to be made

Consider how the decision relates to ethics

Decision Relates to an Ethical Concern
(Ethical Concern = uncertainty or conflict about values, i.e., the "right thing to do" is unclear)

Make a preliminary decision based on the information you have.

Decision Relates to a Systems-level Ethics Quality Gap
(Ethics Quality Gap = disparity between current practices and ideal practices from an ethical perspective)

Refer to IE PE Team or other quality improvement mechanism or, if not appropriate for a QI approach, to the IE Council or another leadership committee or workgroup that includes relevant ethics subject-matter expertise.

Decision Relates to Government Ethics
(Government Ethics = legal questions about standards of ethical conduct for employees of the executive branch)

Refer to Designated Agency Ethics Official or Regional Counsel.

Decision Relates to an Ethics Violation
(Ethics Violation = allegation or evidence of serious risk to patients, administrative misconduct, or noncompliance with legal or regulatory standards)

Refer to CBI, Medical Inspector, Privacy Officer, ORO, Information Security, Inspector General, or administrative board, as appropriate.

Use the Ethical Leadership Quality Check to decide on an appropriate decision-making process.

1. Do I have all the important facts relevant to this decision?
2. Have I involved everyone who should be part of this decision?
3. Can I provide a strong ethical justification for this decision?
   - Does this decision reflect organizational, professional, and social values?
   - Do the likely benefits of the decision outweigh any potential harms?
   - Will this decision keep the problem from recurring or establish a good precedent?
   - How would this decision look to someone outside the organization?

Decide on an appropriately systematic decision process.
The more ethically complex the decision, the more systematic the decision-making process needs to be.

If the decision is relatively straightforward, make the decision yourself after thoughtful deliberation.

If the decision requires additional ethical analysis, request an ethics consultation.

If the decision is controversial or high stakes, also consider:
   - Involving the IE Council or another leadership committee
   - Chartering a special workgroup, and/or
   - Using a formal decision-making framework.

Make ethical leadership decision.

Communicate the decision, explaining the decision-making process and ethical justification.