Orientation Guide for IntegratedEthics® Council Members

Congratulations on your appointment to your facility’s IntegratedEthics (IE) council, and welcome to the IE team! This document is designed to help you transition into your new role. As an IE team member, you will be joining VHA’s efforts to move ethics into the organizational mainstream and direct ethics-related activities throughout the VISN and in each facility. As Compliance and Business Integrity and IE Officer Toni A. Wilson put it, “Being a member of the IE council is an avenue for me to ensure our Veterans are offered the best ethical health care environment that is available.”

IE council members play a key role in supporting the IE program. You may regularly encounter ethical concerns that you can bring back to the council for consideration. You can also help improve ethics quality at your facility by contributing to the development and execution of ethics activities in a variety of settings. The IE council is broadly charged with:

- supporting the EL coordinator;
- overseeing and supporting implementation and development of the local IE program;
- ethics policy review and development;
- coordinating ethics-related activities throughout the facility and its associated sites of care delivery;
- communicating ethics standards through education and awareness activities; and
- reviewing and making recommendations for assignment of staff to designated IE positions (IEPO, ECC, PEC, ethics consultants, PE team and IE council).

IE council membership can be personally meaningful as well, as these members relate:

*Being an IE council member was a special time in my career. It was a chance to understand that what we do affects the care our Veterans receive every day. If you feel you are the last one fighting for common sense, proper heath care and best practices, know that there are hundreds of IE team members in the same fight – and we are not just holding our ground – we are winning.*

Pat Phillips, Patient Advocate

*My membership on the IE committee was a honor; it made me sit a little straighter, stand a little taller, and be proud of my work with Veterans as a civilian.*

Randall Kilgore, CBI Officer and IEPO

*As a new member of the ethics committee, my ethical perspectives have evolved from thinking I know right from wrong to learning that there are many concepts of right and wrong.*

Maria E. Vandegrift, Registered Dental Hygienist
Now that you’re part of the IE team, you will need to learn more about your responsibilities and how the IE program works. Be sure to inform your supervisor that you will require sufficient time to carry out your recommended training steps.

**Step I:** Review IE council content:

- VHA Handbook 1004.06, IntegratedEthics®, paragraph 12, pg. 10, describes IE council responsibilities.

- IE Program Officer’s Desk Reference. In Section II, IE Program Overview, pgs. 9-11 (IE council), you’ll learn a little more about IE council operations, structure, and why you were selected for this role. Section V, IE Program Operations, is the IE program officer’s and IE council’s road map for achieving IE goals in your facility.

**Step II:** Review the IE Program training items recommended for leaders throughout the organization. These are found in VHA Handbook 1004.06, IntegratedEthics®, IntegratedEthics Basic Training Resources, Appendix A.

- Look through Ethical Leadership: Fostering an Ethical Environment and Culture. This primer explains the role leaders play in creating and sustaining an ethical culture in health care organizations, critical factors for success, and the specific behaviors leaders use to foster an ethical environment and culture.

- Watch Ethical Leadership: Fostering an Ethical Environment and Culture. This 44-minute interactive video teaches leadership behaviors that will help foster an ethical leadership and culture (TMS #63240).
  - Video with Descriptive Captioning
  - Course Materials to be used in conjunction with EL video

- Ethical Leadership Self-Assessment Tool

Once again, congratulations, and thank you for improving the lives and health of our Veterans by helping to sustain an ethical culture in VA. In the words of Compliance and Business Integrity Officer Toby J. Griffin:

*Simply put, ethics is the underlying foundation that our core I CARE values rest upon. By being part of the IE team, individuals develop a higher sense of purpose within the organization because they better understand how day-to-day decisions can impact our co-workers, our organization and, more importantly, our Veterans.*