IntegratedEthics Council—Instructions for Council Members

Your Role and Responsibilities

The aim of an IntegratedEthics program is to improve ethics quality by integrating three core functions: ethics consultation, preventive ethics, and ethical leadership. The IntegratedEthics Council is the body chiefly responsible for achieving this goal. The council is chaired by the Ethical Leadership Coordinator, who is ultimately responsible for the success of the program. The responsibilities of the council are to:

- coordinate the ethics consultation, preventive ethics, and ethical leadership functions
- ensure communication with relevant programs across the organization
- oversee the ethics consultation and preventive ethics functions
- develop and update policy pertaining to the IntegratedEthics program
- coordinate staff education regarding IntegratedEthics and ethics
- evaluate your facility’s IntegratedEthics structures and processes
- evaluate ethics knowledge, practices, and culture in your facility
- improve specific ethics practices at your facility
- continuously improve your facility’s IntegratedEthics program
- ensure that the facility meets accreditation standards for ethics
- ensure that the facility meets requirements of VHA policy related to ethics in health care

Broadly, your responsibilities are to:

1. **Demonstrate expertise in the IntegratedEthics model**
   Members of the council act as representatives of the IntegratedEthics program across the facility and particularly in their home departments or services. You should be raising the visibility of the IntegratedEthics program and supporting the goals of the program to ensure its success. This role requires that you understand the activities of the council and each of the core functions of IntegratedEthics, serve as a spokesperson for the program in your department or service, encourage staff to participate in training activities, answer questions about the program and its functions, and participate in program activities as appropriate based on your skills and expertise.

2. **Lead or participate in council activities**
   A tenet of excellence in health care is an ongoing commitment to quality improvement. All council members should participate in efforts to improve the quality of the IntegratedEthics program through use of the IntegratedEthics assessment tools and regular quality monitoring of program activities. You’ll lead or participate in one or more council activities, which may include participating on a preventive ethics team, leading an education forum about IntegratedEthics for staff or other leaders, updating ethics-related policies, supporting efforts for accreditation readiness, or other activities as needed.
3. **Ensure integration**
   The council is the key mechanism for integrating the ethics activities undertaken by departments, programs, services, and offices across your facility. Council members should represent diverse areas throughout the organization from which ethics issues arise, including clinical care services, research, and business administration. Council members are responsible for helping to identify ethics issues across the facility that might benefit from the work of the council, such as ethics quality gaps that might be appropriate for the preventive ethics team.

4. **Monitor performance**
   The council is responsible for overseeing the activities of the IntegratedEthics program and acting to support its implementation. The council should ensure that the facility achieves the program’s implementation goals, completes assessment tools and reports performance monitors to VISN leadership. The council is also responsible for developing plans and taking action on the findings from the IntegratedEthics Facility Workbook and Staff Survey. The council should establish mechanisms to monitor progress toward implementing these plans and the overall IntegratedEthics program effectively.

5. **Network externally**
   All council members are invited to share their program’s activities, best practices, and lessons learned. The National Center for Ethics in Health Care will provide forums where this can occur. Check our website, [www.ethics.va.gov/IntegratedEthics](http://www.ethics.va.gov/IntegratedEthics) or [www.ethics.va.gov/IntegratedEthics](http://www.ethics.va.gov/IntegratedEthics), for more information.
Description of Tasks

Get Started

Get to know the IntegratedEthics Program. Reading the introduction to IntegratedEthics and the IntegratedEthics communications materials is an important first step to ensure that you understand the broad concepts and aims of IntegratedEthics. You’ll also want to become familiar with the material in the three primers, 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 frequently as you support the launch of IntegratedEthics at your facility. Three IntegratedEthics video courses are also available to you. These courses walk you through important aspects of each of the functions. You may also want to complete one or more of the IntegratedEthics online learning modules to develop your understanding of the IntegratedEthics concept and its application.

Engage with the National IE Community

Register with the national IntegratedEthics website. Council members may wish to register with the IntegratedEthics website (vawww.ethics.va.gov/IntegratedEthics or www.ethics.va.gov/IntegratedEthics), which 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.

Understand Your Current Ethics Program

Participate in completion of the IE Facility Workbook. The IntegratedEthics Council is responsible for ensuring completion of the facility workbook. You should contribute your knowledge of facility structure and processes to help the council develop its plan for completing the workbook. You should also participate as needed to identify and implement appropriate responses to workbook findings.

Support administration of the IE Staff Survey. The IntegratedEthics Council is responsible for planning and monitoring the administration of the IntegratedEthics Staff Survey. You should support the council in administering the survey by encouraging staff in your department to participate. The council is also responsible for analyzing survey results and developing a plan to respond to any issues and concerns identified. Your first step is to help publicize the results of the survey, which is essential to demonstrate to staff members that their participation was both important and appreciated. It can also help to further demonstrate the importance of IntegratedEthics and generate greater awareness of your IntegratedEthics program. You will then work with your staff to implement activities developed by the council to respond to the survey results.

Participate in Assigned Council Duties

Coordinate staff education regarding IntegratedEthics and ethics. The council is responsible for taking a systematic approach to ensuring that staff throughout the facility are familiar with IntegratedEthics and knowledgeable about ethics in health care. The council, or a designated subcommittee, should apply a quality improvement approach to ensure that educational efforts are effective in meeting clearly defined
organizational needs. The IntegratedEthics primers, video courses, and online learning modules can serve as basic resources for staff education. Efforts to educate staff in ethics consultation and preventive ethics can be delegated to those functions. Ethics education should also be regularly incorporated into ongoing educational activities, such as grand rounds, case conferences, inservices, and annual meetings.

**Update policy related to ethics in health care.** In addition to developing policy for your IntegratedEthics program, the council is responsible for ensuring that facility policies relating to ethics in health care—such as informed consent for treatments and procedures, advance directives, or end-of-life care—meet the requirements of VA national policy in the relevant areas. The council or a designated subcommittee should also work with the preventive ethics team to identify and address local policy requirements—or lack of policy—that give rise to systemic ethics quality issues.

**Ensure that the facility meets accreditation standards for ethics.** The council is responsible for developing specific action plans to ensure that the facility meets accreditation standards around ethics and is ready to meet those standards on an ongoing basis. As of 2006, the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations includes 24 standards explicitly pertaining to ethics, patient rights, and organizational responsibilities (RI.1–RI.3.1). It is the council’s responsibility to see that the facility meets these standards and those of other relevant accrediting bodies.