IntegratedEthics® Staff Activity

Practicing Integrity and Advocacy Using “3Ws”

Lunch and Learn Skill Development Activity

This staff activity is designed for use in a facilitated group setting with VA staff at all levels. It requires a session facilitator and a meeting room equipped with a laptop and projector. The exercise is designed to be completed in 30 minutes. This session could be held as a “brown bag” learning session over lunch. A longer session of 45 minutes would allow for more group discussion.

The goals of the activity are to:
1. Help staff recognize their responsibility for asking questions about ethics
2. Allow staff an opportunity to practice raising questions about ethics in a workplace scenario

Learning objectives:
At the end of this activity participants will be able to:
- Identify the core VA values that create staff responsibility for asking questions about ethics
- Explain the “3W” method and how it applies to asking questions about ethics
- Model an effective approach for raising questions about ethics in a workplace scenario

Brief description:
During this interactive session, learners will practice raising questions about ethics using the 3W method, review two or three scenarios related to ethics, draft bulleted “scripts” to use the 3W method, and then share their scripts in a group discussion.

The session facilitator uses slides and supporting handouts to provide brief contextual information, give instructions for the activity, explain the “3W” method, present the scenarios, and facilitate the group discussion following the exercise. Six scenarios are offered as options for this exercise. Facilitators can choose two or three of the scenarios to present to the class, or substitute stories of their own that are related to ethics topics. **Note:** The facilitator should present ONLY two or three scenarios and delete the others from the handout. There is limited time for the training and if too many scenarios are presented, participants will likely take too long reading through all of them.
Timing:
1. Introduction: 5 minutes
2. 3W Method and Practice: 7 minutes
3. Participants draft scripts: 8 minutes
4. Participants share responses with the group: 8 minutes
5. (optional) Longer group discussion: 15 minutes
6. Next steps: 2 minutes

Materials:
1. Slides with speaker’s notes
2. Handout: Draft Your 3W Script
3. Handout: Tips for Using the 3W Approach to Ask Questions About Ethics

Optional follow-up:
At the end of the session, the facilitator may ask group members to plan for a follow-up activity. Follow-up activities help ensure the material taught is applied and that learners reflect on their proficiency using the skills introduced during the session.

In preparation for a follow-up session the facilitator should ask participants to do all of the following:

1. Participants should keep track of when they recognized an opportunity to ask questions about ethics and note in a journal or log if they gave that feedback.
2. Participants should reflect on what kept them from giving the feedback or what encouraged them to do so.
3. If they gave the feedback, they should reflect on how they felt while giving the feedback and what they might change about their approach the next time. They should also record these thoughts in their journal.
4. Participants should reconvene as a group in about six weeks to share their successes, lessons learned and recommendations after trying out this practice in their local settings.

The facilitator should schedule a follow-up meeting and be prepared to ask for observations from the participants. Remember to return to the 3W tip sheet to help staff practice using this tool and refine their approach. It is natural for everyone to want to talk about what happened and how he or she felt when having a 3W conversation. Facilitators should try to bring the conversation back around to the 3W practice and have participants consider how well they did or did not use the 3W approach and what they might do differently next time.
Handout: Draft your 3W Script

In an organization with a healthy ethics environment and culture, everyone should take responsibility for recognizing and discussing questions about ethics. To embrace this responsibility is to put I CARE Values into action: holding yourself and others to the highest level of integrity in carrying out your duties and advocating on behalf of Veterans and other staff to ensure VA delivers high quality, safe, effective and ethical service that meet the needs of our patients and other stakeholders.

1. Review the following case scenarios and choose one or two that appeal to you.
2. Working on your own for eight minutes, draft a brief, bulleted script applying the 3W method.
3. Apply Tips for Using the 3W Approach to Ask Questions About Ethics to your script.
4. Be prepared to share your script and ideas during group discussion.
5. If you have time, use a second scenario to draft a second script.

Scenario 1
After picking up your afternoon coffee, you ride up the elevator with several medical students on a crowded elevator. They are speaking about a patient, discussing details such as how long he may live and the complications he faces. You didn’t hear them give a name, but they identified the patient’s room number and described the patient. You are uncomfortable and you wonder what the other visitors in the elevator think.

What do you do?

Scenario 2
You are a clerk in a busy emergency department in a large city. You see all kinds of patients come through the ER. As a Veteran with your own struggles over the years, you feel empathy for many of the patients who visit the unit. Some of the clinical staff members don’t always seem to feel the same. You have heard them make rude comments about some of the patients. Indeed, you have just heard two of them talking in disparaging tones about a homeless Veteran in need of substance use treatment.

What do you do?

Scenario 3
Several staff members in your unit have been asked to participate in a selection panel for a contract solicitation. You made copies and collated the packages for the review team. Your supervisor, who also supervises the other staff on the review team, asks for a copy of the material so she can keep apprised of the work all of you are involved with.

What do you do?
Scenario 4

You work in a long-term care unit. One of the Veterans is lively and engaging, despite his illness, and you have bonded over your shared military service. The Veteran knows he is very ill and asks that you “look out for him” and “don’t let those doctors go against my wishes.” You think he wrote his wishes in a living will but you aren’t sure. Is it your place to talk to the shift nurse to be sure one of the clinical staff has asked him about his wishes?

What do you do?

Scenario 5

Everyone is under pressure to clear backlogs and waiting lists. Your supervisor says that all the consults assigned to Social Work services in your unit must be cleared in three days and you have to clear them. After looking at the list and the reasons for many of the consults, you don’t think it will be possible to clear the list in three days – you need to contact many Veterans and make follow up appointments with a number of them to fulfill their requests.

What do you do?
Take several minutes to draft one or two scripts here. Use the handout *Tips for Using the 3W Approach to Ask Questions About Ethics* to prepare your script:

What I see:  
______________________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________________  

What I am concerned about:  
______________________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________________  

What I want:  
______________________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________________  

Refined:  
______________________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________________  

What I see:  
______________________________________________________________________  

What I am concerned about:  
______________________________________________________________________  

What I want:  
______________________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________________
Tips for using the 3W Approach to Ask Questions About Ethics

The 3W approach is used to promote better team communication and help build a culture where all members of the team feel they can raise questions about potential patient safety issues. The approach can also be used to frame and raise questions about ethics.

The 3W stands for:
1. What I see
2. What I am concerned about
3. What I want

When framing your 3W response, keep the following tips in mind:
- Be respectful. Ask permission to talk and use the person’s name.
- State facts, not motives.
- Use team language (i.e., we and us) whenever possible.
- Be empathetic and normalize the behavior (e.g., I feel the same, anyone could).
- Be clear about your concern and frame it in terms of values.
- State your confusion over how to resolve the concern you see.
- Be inquisitive. Ask questions and try to understand their perspective.
- Invite problem solving. Ask them what they think should be done.

Practice this technique in a situation where a doctor is failing to visit a dying patient.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCRIPT</th>
<th>TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. X, may I speak to you for a minute?</td>
<td>Respectful, use of name, ask permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t see you round on Mr. Y today.</td>
<td><strong>What you see</strong>, stated as fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We were all just saying how hard it is for us to care for him when there is so little we can do.</td>
<td>Normalize behavior, use team language, empathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am concerned that we aren’t being respectful or honoring him properly when we cut short our clinical time with him.</td>
<td><strong>What you are concerned about</strong>, use team language, frame using values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would really like the team to spend a similar amount of time with Mr. Y as we do with our other patients.</td>
<td><strong>What you want</strong>, use team language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was hoping you might have some suggestions about how to raise the issue with the team and ensure we continue to support Mr. Y with dignity during his last days. What do you think?</td>
<td>Be inquisitive, invite problem solving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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