TRIAGE TOOL FOR ETHICS-RELATED LEADERSHIP DECISIONS

Ethics-related leadership decision needs to be made

Consider how the decision relates to ethics

1. **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.

2. **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 Preventive Ethics 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.

3. **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.

4. **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 Compliance and Business Integrity, Medical Inspector, Privacy Officer, Office of Research Oversight, 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.