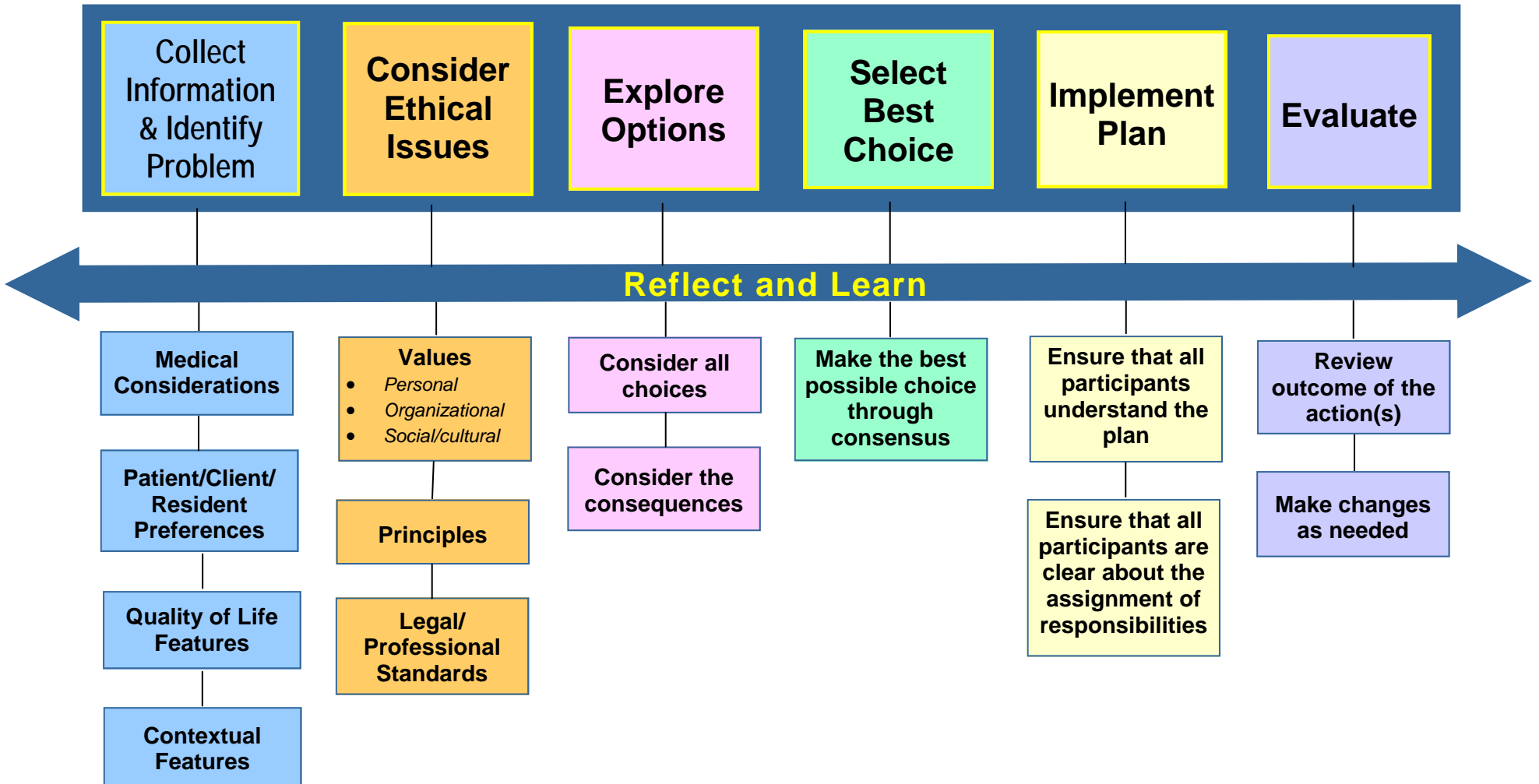




BRANDON REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

BRANDON REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY Ethical Decision-Making Framework





Steps for Applying the Ethical Decision-Making Framework

To facilitate a comprehensive examination of an ethically charged situation and exploration of possible choices, the following steps should be followed:

1. Collect the information and identify the problem (for the particular situation at that particular time):
 - Gather information and facts from all involved
 - Discuss relevant questions to help sort the information, perspectives and facts of the problem (see page 3):
 - Medical indications
 - Patient/client/resident preferences
 - Quality of life
 - Contextual features
2. Consider ethical issues:
 - While reviewing the problem situation and exploring choices, consider these:
 - Values:
 - ✓ Personal
 - ✓ Organizational (Integrity, Continuous Improvement, Respect and Dignity, Teamwork, Accessibility)
 - ✓ Social/cultural
 - Principles:
 - ✓ Encourage and respect personal choices/decisions [Autonomy]
 - ✓ Be truthful – do not deceive [Veracity]
 - ✓ Maximize good [Beneficence]
 - ✓ Minimize harm [Non–Maleficence]
 - ✓ Be fair [Justice]
 - ✓ Use best means and skills [Fidelity]
 - Legal/Professional Standards:
 - ✓ Legal requirements
 - ✓ Professional codes of ethics
 - ✓ Employment standards
3. Explore the options:
 - Consider all choices
 - Consider the consequences
4. Select the best choice:
 - Make the best possible choice through consensus
5. Implement the plan:
 - Ensure all participants
 - ✓ Understand the plan
 - ✓ Are clear about the assignment of responsibilities
6. Evaluate:
 - Review outcomes of the action (s)
 - Make changes as needed

Questions to Help Collect Information and Identify the Problem for Clinical Ethical Issues

Medical Indications

- What is the person's medical problem? History? Diagnosis? Prognosis?
- Is the problem acute? Chronic? Critical?
- Emergent? Reversible?
- What are the goals of treatment?
- What are the probabilities of success?
- What are the risks involved?
- What are plans in case of therapeutic failure?
- In sum, how can this person benefit by medical, nursing or other care?
- How can harm be avoided?

Patient/Client/Resident Preferences

- Is the patient mentally capable and legally competent?
- Has the patient been informed of benefits and risks, understood this information and given consent?
- What is the patient stating about preferences for treatment?
- Is there evidence of incapacity?
- If incapacitated, who is the appropriate surrogate? Is the surrogate using appropriate standards for decision-making?
- Has the patient expressed prior preferences, e.g. Health Care Directives?
- Is the patient unwilling to cooperate with medical treatment? If so, why?
- In sum, is the patient's right to choose being respected both ethically and legally?

Quality of Life

- What are the prospects, with or without treatment, for a return to normal life?
- What physical, mental and social limitations is the patient likely to experience if treatment succeeds?
- Are there biases that might prejudice the providers' evaluation of the patient's quality of life?
- Has the person expressed any thoughts about his/her condition that indicates they feel that continued life might be judged undesirable?
- Is the patient's present or future condition such that his or her continued life might be judged undesirable?
- Is there any plan or rationale to forgo treatment?
- Are these plans (maintenance, rehabilitative, preventive or palliative) looking at quality of life?

Contextual Features

- Are there family issues that might influence treatment decisions?
- Are there provider issues that might influence treatment decisions? i.e. conflict of interest
- Are there financial and economic factors?
- Are there religious or cultural factors?
- Is there any justification to breach confidentiality?
- Are there problems of allocation of resources?
- What are the legal implications for the decision?
- Is clinical research or teaching involved?

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- Norman Regional Health Authority—Framework for Ethical Decision Making—April 2005
- Regional Health Authority Central Manitoba Inc.—Framework for Ethical Decision Making—February 2005
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