



RIDGEVALLEY SENIORS ASSISTANCE SOCIETY

Ethical Decision-Making Framework

Ridgevalley Seniors Home holds itself accountable for decisions and the ways in which decisions are made. It's committed to facing difficult issues and ethical dilemmas with honesty and integrity, and open ourselves to creative ideas through colleagues, partners, and God's leading. This framework clarifies the mission, values and principles to help staff, residents, family members and caregivers understand how these cornerstones translate into everyday decisions and actions. It provides a set of principles that direct decision-making when there are difficult decisions with conflicting and competing interests. These discussions also provide education and awareness of ethics within an organization and an open forum for ethical discussion.

Ridgevalley's Senior Leadership and Board provide a formal framework for contributing to a culture of ethical behavior and action within the organization. It serves as a tool to inspire individuals within the organization to act in a way that assures the highest quality of person-centered care, enhances community relationships, fairness and helps establish community confidence in our work. The development of an ethical framework will serve in an advisory capacity relevant to Ridgevalley Seniors Home.

Ridgevalley has developed an ethics process that will address the following criteria:

- Reflect the organization's core values that include demonstrating our commitment to the sanctity of life through exceptional, holistic palliative care until natural death.
- Enhance a sense of community, of belonging to a group with common values and a common mission.
- Establish a process for reporting and discussing ethical issues
- Promote a high standard of service delivery, extending God's care through kindness, empathy, and graciousness.
- Establish a framework for accountability, responsibility and decision-making.

1. Objectives:

To provide the highest quality of resident care:

- Facilitate an inclusive decision-making process where the resident or resident's family and friends' preferences are considered and their values, culture and beliefs are respected.

To assist staff in making ethically justified decisions:

- Assist in identifying causes of ethical problems and promoting practices consistent with ethical norms, standards and policies in place.

To facilitate through conflict:

- Between staff, residents or families try to reach a consensus on what is best for the resident in a respectful way with attention to the interests, rights and responsibilities of those involved.

Engage in reflective practice and consider a "gut reaction" to the situation, while reflecting on God's leading: What preconceptions and judgments might you bring to the situation? What are your loyalties and intuitions? Where do these come from?

State the conflict or dilemma as you currently see it: Articulate the issue in one sentence. Break the problem down into two questions or issues and tackle them one at a time. Example of ethics question: "Given [state uncertainty or conflict about values], what decisions or actions are ethically justifiable, and do they align with our values?"

Determine the best process for decision-making: How urgent is the situation? How can residents/family/stakeholders best be engaged? Who ultimately has decision-making authority? Residents/family/stakeholders deserve to know and understand how and why a decision that affects them was made. It is important to remember that transparency is not just about the transmission of information; it is also about keeping people engaged constructively in the process. In the rare cases where confidentiality is ethically necessary, the process should still be made as transparent as possible while identifying the confidentiality constraints explicitly.

2. Determine the facts:

In any complex situation, different parties will have different views of the facts of the situation. Ideally, those involved should have a chance to present their views to one another in a respectful, open environment, considering both the context of the situation and the evidence.

Stakeholder Perspectives: all stakeholders should have an opportunity to voice their views about the issue as appropriate (staff, community, residents, family, AHS partners, Church community, etc.)

Evidence: include risks and benefits to the organization and residents; impact of situation on quality or services; best practices, etc.

Resource Implications: human and financial

3. SELECT Reasonable Options:

Always look for more than two options. Try brainstorming options without evaluating at first or start by describing your "ideal" solution and work backwards to options that are more realistic given the context. Identify alternative courses of action. Balance conflicting ethical obligations and identify the most important for care and safety. Judge each option according to values. Decide and choose a course of action.

4. Understand Values & Duties

Which values are in conflict? Where values may be compromised, what can you do to minimize the negative impact? Are there professional or legal obligations or standards to consider? What are the biases of the consulting team? What are the relevant values/moral resources? How do the values apply to the options?

5. **EVALUATE & Justify Options:**

For each option consider:

- ✓ Resident's decision-making capacity. Are they fully informed?
- ✓ Wishes of the resident, Power of Attorney (POA), Health Representative, family, documents (i.e. Level of Intervention (LOI))
- ✓ Medical condition, risk benefits, and wishes. Are all participants fully informed?
- ✓ Impact on quality of life.
- ✓ What are the possible harms to residents/family/stakeholders?
- ✓ What are the probable benefits to residents/family/stakeholders?
- ✓ What will be the impact on staff, our mission and quality of care?
- ✓ Who else is affected?
- ✓ What do the law and policies say?
- ✓ What significant expenses are involved?
- ✓ Which duties, principles and values support this option?
- ✓ What if everyone in these circumstances did this? (Does this set a good example? Are we making it easier or harder for others to do the right thing?)
- ✓ Does it meet Organizational Policies and Standards?

Choose the option with the best consequences overall and closest alignment with key duties, principles and values: Clearly state reasons for the decision. Remember that you are not aiming at "the perfect" choice, but a good and defensible choice under the circumstances. Anticipate how you might answer criticisms.

6. **SUSTAIN & Review the Plan:**

Accepting responsibility for an ethical choice means ensuring that the decision made is enacted by articulating a clear plan of action, communicating it to residents/family/stakeholders appropriately and addressing systems that might have contributed to the problem. It also means accepting the possibility that you might be wrong or that you may need to revise your decision in light of new information or changing circumstances. In reviewing the plan consider:

- ✓ How well did the decision-making process work?
- ✓ Was the decision carried out?
- ✓ Was the result satisfactory?
- ✓ Does this situation point to a systems problem (e.g. policy gap)?
- ✓ What lessons were learned from the situation?
- ✓ How will the team respond to similar situations in the future?
- ✓ Are there opportunities to appeal or modify the decision based on new information?
- ✓ Have new questions emerged? (If so, do they require similar deliberation?)
- ✓ Is there a formal evaluation plan in place to monitor progress, good practices and opportunities for improvement?