

	Subject: Ethics Consult Service	Number I-A-03b
	Department/Function Ethics, Rights and Responsibilities	Reviewed / Revised 01-12-04

OBJECTIVE: To provide a consultation service at 882-6544 for clinical situations which present difficult ethical problems to clinicians, patients, and families and to provide assistance in the decision making process. Final decisions regarding patient care are left to the patient, or their surrogate, and the health care team.

POLICY: The Ethics Consult service provides consultation to assist with clinical ethical problems and leads key stakeholders; physicians, nurses, patients, family members, and others through discussion and analysis of relevant issues. The Ethics Consultant(s) facilitates in the decision making processes of the patient, the family, and members of the health care team.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Members of the consult service are physicians and others skilled and trained in the area of health ethics, and are assisted by the Clinical Ethics Committee (CEC).
- Any member of the health care team directly involved in the care of the patient, as well as the patient and their family, can request an ethics consultation or assistance from Social Services or Pastoral Care.

PROCEDURE:

Responsibility

Staff Members

- Notify the team leader or the Department Manager that there is an ethical concern and the need to contact the Ethics Consult Service.
- Communicate with the consult service manager by phone or in person concerning the ethical question or issue.
- Be present for the consultation if appropriate and if requested.
- Members of the health care team, as well as the consultant, should invite the patient/family to be present and participate in the consultation meeting.

Patient or Family Members

- If a patient or family member needs a consult they should notify the attending physician that there is an ethical concern and that they have requested a consult. Participate in the deliberation as able.

Service Manager

- Notify consultant that a consultation has been requested and provide available pertinent information. (The person requesting the consult does this after normal working hours, on weekends, and on holidays by contacting the hospital operator.)
- Notify the attending physician, if they are not already aware that a request for ethics consultation has been made. (The person requesting the consult does this after normal working hours, on weekends, and on holidays by contacting the hospital operator.)
- Maintain and distribute the on-call roster for contacting the Ethics Consult Service. (Roster is available through Telecommunications.)

Ethics Consultant

- Obtain information about the identified clinical ethical concern from the originator of the request and the health care team.
- Schedule a consultation meeting of the key stakeholders as soon as possible.
- Obtain and provide relevant literature and current thought on the issue.
- Assist in identifying resolution options for the ethical issue.
- Submit a timely written ethics consult for the medical record and file a copy with the consult service manager for review by CEC.
- Notify CEC if group consultation is needed.
- Provide timely follow-up and further input on the case as needed.

REFERENCES:

Nursing Generic Structure Standards

Medical Staff Bylaws, Rules and Regulations

Article V: Ethics and Ethical Relationships

Hospital Policy # I-A-06, "Patient Rights and Responsibilities"