

<b>Document Name:</b>	Framework for Ethical Decision Making		
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<b>Classification:</b>	Board of Directors	<b>Section:</b> Program & Quality Effectiveness	
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## **POLICY STATEMENT:**

Hôpital Glengarry Memorial hospital is committed to conducting all of the hospital's administrative and governance affairs, activities, patient care, and treatments with the highest level of ethical conduct, simultaneously supporting a culture of trust, integrity, and openness.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Accountability for Reasonableness (A4R) ethical decision-making framework that is used to inform decision making within the Corporation to support organizational ethical decision making.

In addition to abiding by several other existing policies which pertain to the promotion of Board ethical conduct: Governance and Accountability, Code of Conduct, Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest, and others pertaining to compliance with Federal and Provincial Law, to name a few.

## **PREAMBLE:**

The purpose of this policy is to promote a culture of trust, integrity, and openness. HGMMH's reputation for integrity and honesty is important; hence, our commitment to the realization of our vision, mission, through honesty, fairness, and respect of the individual and the community we serve is paramount. To achieve this goal, at all times we must be asking ourselves "Am I doing the right thing, or making the decision for the right reason?"

The framework incorporates the organization's mission, vision, and values as well as additional values/principles that are agreed upon by relevant stakeholders.

## **PROCEDURE:**

1. The A4R Framework provides a step-by-step, fair process to help guide healthcare providers and administrators in working through ethical issues encountered in the delivery of healthcare.
2. The A4R Framework incorporates the following steps:
  - a) **Determine** your mandate and the question you are trying to answer as this will establish the type and scope of the answer you get. The goal is to ensure that the group is working on the same problem and asking the right question to solve it.

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- b) **Identify** your stakeholders (those who will be impacted by the decision) and **include** them in decision-making. Stakeholders may be involved as decision-makers or as consultants in decision-making. The aim is to ensure that decision-making includes a broad range of ideas and stakeholder perspectives. Consider who else needs to be consulted for their perspective after a draft decision is reached.
  - c) **Clarify** your decision-making procedure upfront (e.g., identify organizational values and strategic priorities, develop criteria from those values, prioritize the criteria, generate options, judge quality of your different options against those criteria, and select option). Decision-makers and stakeholders alike need to know and understand a) how decisions will be made and b) how and on what basis they can revisit decisions.
  - d) **Provide** a statement of rationale for each decision. It is not enough that a decision is made. Ethical decision-making requires that reasons be given to justify each decision utilizing value-based criteria.
  - e) **Communicate** the decision and its rationale to stakeholders. The key is access to information and this means *effective communication*. Knowing who your stakeholders are will help to identify who best to communicate with them and how (e.g., websites, email, forums, newsletters). Better yet, ask their input on how to develop an effective communication strategy.
  - f) **Revisit and revise** decisions on the basis of new evidence or argument brought forward either through a formal appeals mechanism or through consultation with stakeholders.
  - g) **Evaluate** how successfully the decision-making process met the conditions of 'accountability for reasonableness'. There may be gaps between *what you do* and *what you should be doing*. To close this gap, you need to be able to evaluate your success.
  - h) **Improve** the decision-making process to make it more ethical. The gaps you identify are areas of improvement for subsequent iterations of decision-making. Learning from experience demonstrates that you take seriously our corporate commitment to being publicly accountable and to seeking excellence in how we do business as a health care institution.
3. To further facilitate the process, the Regional Ethicist Program may be approached for input / leadership in the process.
  4. In addition to Appendix A, HGMH uses the following graphic to depict the A4R ethical decision-making framework process.

APPENDIX A

## Accountability for Reasonableness (A4R) Ethical Decision Making Framework Steps

### Determine and Identify

- Determine your mandate and the key question.
- Identify stakeholders and involve them in decision-making.
- Ensure alignment on the problem and question.

### Clarify and Provide

- Clarify decision-making procedures (values, strategic priorities)
- Share how decisions will be made and revisited.
- Document rationale for decisions using value-based criteria.

### Communicate

- Communicate decisions and their rationale with stakeholders.
- Seek input on communication strategy.

### Revisit and Revise

- Revisit decisions as needed based on new evidence or stakeholder input.

### Evaluate and Improve

- Evaluate success based on "accountability for reasonableness".
- Identify gaps and implement improvements for future processes.

## **DEFINITIONS:**

**Ethics:** is about making "right" or "good" choices and the reasons that we give for our choices and actions. Ethics promotes reflective practice in the delivery of health care. Ethics can be described as a way of critically looking at issues in health care that encompasses:

- Deciding what we should do - what decisions are morally right or acceptable based on the values and principles we agree are relevant.
- Explaining why we should do it; justify our decision using language of values and principles to explain why
- Describing how we should do it - outlining an appropriate process of enacting the decision.