

## About the Ethics Service

Modern health care has given us many different options for treatment, sometimes creating difficult decisions for patients, families, and the healthcare team. The Ethics Service is committed to supporting patients, families and caregivers as they deal with complex issues in today's healthcare environment.

There are many reasons to talk with someone in the Ethics Service: sometimes patients cannot speak for themselves, and family members are not sure what to do about a loved one's care; occasionally healthcare providers disagree about the best way to treat a patient. The Ethics Service can help by facilitating discussion, identifying ethical concerns, and generating options. Members of the Ethics Service can help you work through the concerns of everyone involved to arrive at a decision that is right for the patient.

## Help When We Can Help

An ethics consultation can be helpful to:

- Facilitate discussion regarding differences of opinion that exist among caregivers and/or family members about treatment
- Support patients or family members in making decisions about what type of care the patient should receive or the goals of that care
- Facilitate discussions regarding end-of-life decision making
- Educate patients, families, and staff on hospital policies effecting patient care, such as life-saving treatments or resuscitation
- Work with patients, families, and staff to incorporate personal values, as well as religious and cultural traditions, into the decision-making process
- Address questions about a patient or proxy's ability to make decisions about treatment (proxies are people who are appointed to make decisions for patients who cannot do so for themselves)
- Assist in completing an Advance Directive document, which is a written statement of the patient's wishes regarding care. It may include the assignment of a Health Care Proxy or the creation of a living will
- Address concerns about possible limitations on care set by an insurer or third party payer

## Process Ethics Consultation Process

Anyone associated with a patient's care, including, the patient, family members, or healthcare providers can initiate an ethics consultation.

Many times this meeting will occur by bringing together members of the hospital's Ethics Committee, the doctors and nurses caring for the patient, the patient and his or her family. The meeting may also include other hospital staff such as a social worker, chaplain, or lawyer.

The purpose of this consultation is to consider the issues and concerns, explore alternatives, and generate options for care. Within 24 hours of a request for consultation, a member of the Ethics Service will address the situation. When the consultation process is complete, a summary of the consultation will be entered in the patient's medical record.

It is important to understand that the ethics consult team will work with you to promote communication and shared decision making. Ethics consultants do NOT make decisions for patients; rather we seek to provide guidance and advice.

### Patient Rights and Confidentiality

We respect and enforce each patient's right to confidentiality and we respect our patients' choices. If you have a question about patient rights, ask to see the Patient Bill of Rights.

## Services

### Additional Services

In addition to consultations, the Center for Bioethics provides the following services:

- Policy Development and Review
- Staff Education
- Research and Publication
- Patient and Community Education
- Unit-based Programs
- Consultation on Organizational Ethics

## Languages

### Languages

To make sure all of our patients can get the help they need, we have team members who speak both English and Spanish and we will work with interpreters for patients who speak other languages.

## Contact

### Contact Us

**(617) 732-8590**

We are available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.– 4:30 p.m., and we have a confidential voicemail box that is available 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. If you have an emergency after hours or on the weekend, you can call the page operator at (617) 732-6660 and ask for beeper #18590 to reach our on-call ethics consultant.

## Center for Bioethics

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BRIGHAM AND  
WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

## Ethics Service

**Providing Assistance with  
Difficult & Complex Patient  
Care Decisions**

**Phone: (617) 732-8590**

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