

## Overview of Clinical Ethics Consultation: Process and Considerations Quick Summary

### Getting started

- Consider what the goals of your clinical ethics consultation (CEC) service will be, what organizational supports and barriers exist, and address issues of accountability
- Assess which approach(es) to CEC, e.g., single ethics consultant, by committee, small team, or ethics mentor/influentials, may work best for your local context
- Develop a plan for building capacity with those involved in CEC

### Develop and describe your CEC process

This includes, as appropriate, any relevant forms and terms of reference.

There are a number of possible steps included in the CEC process, which will both influence and be influenced by the goals you establish:

- *Access* – who gets to use CEC, how will you build awareness of this service, what will be the response time?
- *Intake and triage* – when a request is made, gather information about the situation, who is and should be involved, etc. and identify whether the issue is an ethics issue and if a CEC is appropriate
- *Notification* – let people involved in the consult know that it is proceeding, what will be expected of them; determine whether the patient and/or attending physician are, and should be, aware of the consult
- *Discussion/deliberation/analysis/reflection* – there are different possible roles for clinical ethics consultants including facilitator, ethical analysis facilitator, and recorder
  - o *Opening statement* – introductions, ground rules, objectives
  - o *Clarification/overview of the clinical situation*
  - o *Focus on the process* – who speaks first, allowing emotional response, being prepared for possible tension and conflict, clarifying the issues, identifying, deliberating, and reflecting on the ethics features, assessing different courses of action
  - o *Wrap-up* – summarize discussion and any recommendations arrived at, agreement on the record, offer of additional support, if appropriate,
- *Documentation* – record of consult, any recommendations, and determine if will go on patient's chart
- *Debriefing* – discuss the process, share learning
- *Evaluation* – by participants in consultation

### Elements of an effective CEC service

Keep these in mind: capacity-building, accessible, sustainable, accountable, reflective, responsive