



# *Ethics*

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## *at Caritas*



CARITAS HEALTH GROUP



*Choices dominate our life. Wherever we find ourselves within the Caritas community, we each have choices to make. By reflecting upon the legacy of our founders, our shared mission, vision, values and ethical framework, as we seek to make good ethical choices, we are not alone. A history of over a 100 years of ethical reflection and experience has shaped, matured and deepened our commitment at Caritas to heal the body, enrich the mind and nurture the soul of one another as well as the people and communities we serve.*

## ETHICS AT CARITAS

Since the beginning of the first Caritas health organization—the Edmonton General in 1895—ethical reflection has been a cornerstone of who we are and what we do. Grounded in the traditions of our founders, the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Montreal and the Misericordia Sisters and the evolving ethical reflection of the Catholic Church, Caritas seeks to bring the best of our wisdom and lived experience to ethical issues. Ethics touches everyone from the bedside to the boardroom—whether the issue is determining the best response to a medical emergency, allocating scarce resources in a just manner or maintaining personal and corporate integrity in the face of adversity.

Ethics permeates Caritas—from clinical ethics that focuses on the relationship between the caregiver and those they care for to organizational ethics that challenge us at Caritas to make departmental and organizational decisions congruent with our mission and core values. Each day members of the Caritas community make important personal, clinical and organizational decisions. For Caritas, ethics is a way of life that examines who we ought to be and what we ought to do in light of who we say we are.

Ethics is central to our identity as a health organization. This guide provides an overview of our mission, vision and values and the framework and principles which shape our ethical reflection.

## WHO WE SAY WE ARE

### *Our Mission*

*Healing the Body  
Enriching the Mind  
Nurturing the Soul*

### *Our Core Values*

*Respect, Dignity, Care,  
Concern for All*

*Responsive to  
Community Needs*

*Responsible Stewardship*

### *Caritas Vision*

*The vision of Caritas provides a picture of “what we ought to do,” as well as our commitment to one another and the people we serve.*

#### OUR CALLING

We are called to serve—to be of service to any or all in need of health and healing. Our work calls us to restore people to wholeness, attending to the physical, emotional, psychological, social, economic and spiritual aspects of their lives. We are called to honour the right of all people to be treated with respect, dignity and compassion. We are

called to community, to work inter-dependently with those who share a commitment to human health and well-being. We are called to be stewards, respecting and honouring the legacy of our founding institutions.

#### OUR COMMITMENT

We will live our mission with integrity in all that we do as caregivers, coworkers and Caritas community. We will act as a unified family, celebrating the strengths and contributions of each member to the Caritas ministry. We are

We will be seekers, restless in our determination to respond to needs and opportunities, relentless in our search for understanding, and driven to create and share knowledge. We will be a dynamic community, embracing change with hope, courage, creativity, and a commitment to service. We will be a place where people find fulfillment, engaging spirits, nurturing souls and empowering the vocations of each member.

## CATHOLIC HEALTH ETHICS GUIDE



As a Catholic health care organization, Caritas Health Group does its ethical reflection within the context of our mission, vision, values and the *Health Ethics Guide* approved by the Catholic Bishops of Canada.

The purpose of the guide is to “facilitate sound ethical reflection that leads to informed decision-making. It presents a moral vision reflecting Roman Catholic teaching on health ethics as it applies to contemporary Canadian society.” (page viii)

The guide is divided into the following chapters:

1. The Communal Nature of Care
2. Dignity of the Human Person
3. Human Reproduction
4. Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation
5. Care of the Dying Person
6. Research on Human Subjects
7. Governance and Administration

The appendices include:

1. A Framework for Ethical Discernment
2. Principle of Legitimate Cooperation
3. Glossary of Terms
4. Selected Bibliography

*Copies of the **Health Ethics Guide** are available on all medical units, in department offices and Caritas libraries. Ethics consultants are available at all times to assist you. Simply contact the switchboard and ask for the “on call” ethics consultant.*

## FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

*An ethical dilemma arises when there is tension between loyalties, responsibilities, duties, rights or values all of which are good in themselves, but not all of which can be satisfied in a particular situation. In our personal, professional and organizational life, we often struggle with issues for which no “right” answer seems available. In these situations, it is important to think through as carefully as possible the many factors that are at stake.*

**Ethics** is the discipline that examines who we ought to be and what we ought to do in light of who we say we are.

**Organizational Ethics** is the intentional use of values to guide the decisions of a group.

**Clinical Ethics** focuses on the encounter between patients/residents and health care providers.

## WHO WE OUGHT TO BE

*As the **Health Ethics Guide** states: Christian ethical reasoning is based upon a worldview contained in the gospel as interpreted by the church. This worldview gives rise to values and principles that direct ethical decision making and that enable us to respond to the call to respect dignity, promote justice and foster trust.*

Ethical reflection at Caritas happens within the context of key principles and values as outlined in the **Health Ethics Guide** as well as our shared mission, vision and values.

### **Fundamental Values to Ethical Reflection**

1. Dignity of the Human Person.
2. Interconnectedness of every human person.

### **Related Values that Provide a Lense for Decision-Making**

1. Stewardship and care for creation, each other and the common good.
2. Respect for Life from conception until natural death.
3. Common Good of all people by creating a just and compassionate society.
4. Charity and solidarity responds to the needs of all people with a special emphasis upon the voiceless, poor and marginated.
5. Creativity.

# WHAT WE OUGHT TO DO: PROCESS FOR DECISION-MAKING

## 1. Define the Issue(s)

*Defining the issue or problem begins the very important process of reaching consensus regarding what the issue actually is.*

## 2. Clarify the facts as much as possible

- Establish the facts of the issue:  
*e.g. who, what, where, when, why, how*
- Establish what **we do not know**
- Describe the relevant factors:  
*e.g. social, economic, political, legal*

## 3. Identify stakeholders and their perspectives

- Clarify perspectives:
  - How do you see this issue?
  - Name the perspectives of the various participants

## 4. Analyze the values

- What values are at stake?
- Determine value conflicts:
  - What values are being affirmed?
  - What values are being negated?

## 5. Identify alternative courses of action in light of our mission, vision and values

- What are the options?
- What are the pros and cons of each option, including doing nothing?

## 6. Make a decision

- What option best advances the mission, vision, and values and strategic directions?
- Are there any contingency plans in case the decision does not have the intended outcomes or deals with possible conflicts?

## 7. Implement the decision

- Who will implement the decision?
- How and when will the decision be communicated to all stakeholders?
- What process and criteria for measuring will be used to evaluate the decision and outcome?

## MORAL PRINCIPLES *The following moral principles provide an additional reference:*

### Double Effect

Action has two consequences: beneficial & harmful

### Totality & Integrity

No human function can ever be sacrificed except for the saving or better functioning of the whole person. Basic human capacities may not be sacrificed if more harm than good would result to the person.

### Subsidiarity

Decisions taken closest to grassroots

### Free and Informed Decision Making

The person receiving care is the primary decision maker; advanced health care directives must be respected

### Confidentiality

- a) Privacy of personal information
- b) Freedom from unnecessary intrusion of others

### Legitimate Cooperation

To understand this unique Catholic Principle, please read pages 88-92 in the **Health Ethics Guide**.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS FROM THE *Health Ethics Guide*

**Abortion:** A *direct* abortion is a procedure whose deliberate purpose is to terminate the life of an embryo or a fetus. An *indirect* abortion is a procedure necessary to save the life of the mother in which the death of the fetus is an inevitable result, e.g. the treatment of an ectopic pregnancy.

**Allocation:** The designation or the setting aside of resources for specific purposes. (see ‘Rationing’)

**Common Good:** The sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1906).

**Competence:** Possessing sufficient capacity to make a reasonable decision for one’s own best interest.

**Conscience:** The specifically human capacity to make practical judgements in matters involving ethical issues.

**Consent (informed):** Informed consent requires that an individual possess competence and freedom. They must understand and appreciate the information needed to make a reasonable decision in their own best interest.

**Distributive Justice:** The obligation of society to distribute the goods of that society equitably to its individual members.

**Duress:** In the context of the principle of legitimate cooperation, duress refers to those pressures which cause the cooperator to lose the freedom to refuse to cooperate lest a greater evil occur.

**Moral Certainty:** The confidence that all of the conditions required for making an informed decision have been met beyond a reasonable doubt.

**Principle:** A more specific articulation of a value that is used as a starting point or rule of thumb for good ethical reflection and action.

**Religion:** The expression of spirituality through traditions, rites and practices usually within the context of an organized faith.

**Spirituality:** The search for the sacred. A conscious striving to move beyond isolation and self-absorption to a deeper awareness of interconnectedness with the self, other human beings and the transcendent.



For a clinical ethics consult, please call the Caritas Switchboard for the Caritas Ethics Service contact at your site.