

Guidelines for Ethical Decision Making

Resident/Client Preference

- Is the individual competent? Is he/she able to discuss the options and potential outcomes?
- Has the individual been fully informed?
- Have the alternatives and possible consequences been discussed with the individual?
- Has the individual had time to reflect upon the situation and upon the possible outcomes?
- Has the individual made a clear statement about his/her wishes? If so, what are they?
- Has the individual discussed the situation with his/her support system?
- If the individual is not competent, did he/she ever make a clear statement that would indicate what his/her wishes would be in these circumstances?
- Has the individual prepared a written statement regarding his/her wishes ?
- Has the individual designated a health care representative and/or a power of attorney? A Living Will?
- If the individual is not competent, is there information from anyone regarding what the individual might have wanted or might reasonably be assumed to have wanted?

Legal, Administrative, and External Factors

- Are there statutes or laws that apply to this situation?
- What potential liability might be present with respect to the Society, to the care providers, and to the legal guardian?
- Are there Society policies or guidelines that apply?
- Are there other persons (in or outside of the Society) who should be given information or asked for an opinion?
- Is expense to the resident and/or family and/or organization a factor in this case?

Views of Family and Friends

- Are there family members and/or friends ?
- Who are they?
- Do they understand the issues?
- What are their positions?
- Do they agree with each other?
- Are there any reasons to question their motives?
- Has one person been identified as having the primary responsibility for communication and decision making?
- Does anyone have legal custody of the individual (guardianship, committee)?

Views of the Care Team

- Are the team members fully apprised of the facts?
- What are their views?
- Why do they hold those views?
- If the caregivers disagree, what accounts for the disagreements? Can they be resolved?

Medical Facts

- What is the individual's current medical status?
- Are there other contributing medical conditions?
- What is the diagnosis? The prognosis?
- How reliable are these?
- Has a second opinion been obtained?
- Would it be helpful?
- What treatments are possible?
- What are the risks and benefits?

**Adapted from Burnaby Hospital "Ethics Consultation Team Question Guidelines"*