



## Lakeland Long Term Care Ethical Framework

### Introduction

Lakeland Long Term Care (LLTC) places high value on the integration of best practices in all areas of responsibility. Best practice surrounding ethics is for organizations to have an ethical framework that is utilized to support ethical decision making at all levels. The LLTC Ethics Framework is available to all members of the Board, all staff, physicians, volunteers, students, Residents and families, as well as our community partners.

The ***Fixing Long Term Care Home Act, 2021*** (the “Act”) section 102(2)(b) requires that each licensee implements a standard or protocol for Ethics within their long-term care home (LTCH). As part of the required standard, an ***ethical framework*** must be used to inform decision-making. The ethical framework must include specific key principles, which are developed in collaboration with the interdisciplinary team.

### Why an Ethics Framework?

Ethical decision making is an important part of clinical and overall organizational functioning. An ethics framework can assist organizations and individuals within organizations to identify and work through ethical dilemmas or issues using a standardized decision-making approach. By defining processes, tools and resources to support leaders, clinicians and all staff to manage ethical issues, dilemmas or concerns, the framework is intended to guide discussions and decision making related to ethics issues.

Ethical issues may arise frequently in LTCHs. Ethical principles and values should be considered in decision-making. Ethical frameworks help to guide decision-making and answer the question of “What should we do and why?” Ethical frameworks can be particularly helpful in circumstances where a values conflict or moral tension exists, where you have to choose the least bad option, where there is uncertainty in what to do or how to proceed, or where options exist that could pose a risk of harm to residents, their family or staff. The purpose of this ethical framework is to provide an easy to use, step-by-step transparent, and fair process to help guide in making these decisions.

### Using the IDEA Ethical Decision-Making Framework

The composition of the IDEA Ethical Decision-Making Framework includes:

- The four steps (See Figure 1 below)
- The eight LTC-specific ethical principles to consider
- The five conditions to help ensure good process

The **four steps** help make sense of what might be a lot of information that is relevant and important to remember.

The **eight ethical principles** are identified [in section 2.10 of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Infection Prevention and Control \(IPAC\) Standard for Long-Term Care Homes – April 2022](#). Many of the eight LTC principles involve more general ethical principles and values. These can be added as deemed necessary to highlight what is most important in the reasons given for decisions. The sample **decision-making worksheet** (Appendix B), later in the document, shows how these more general principles apply.

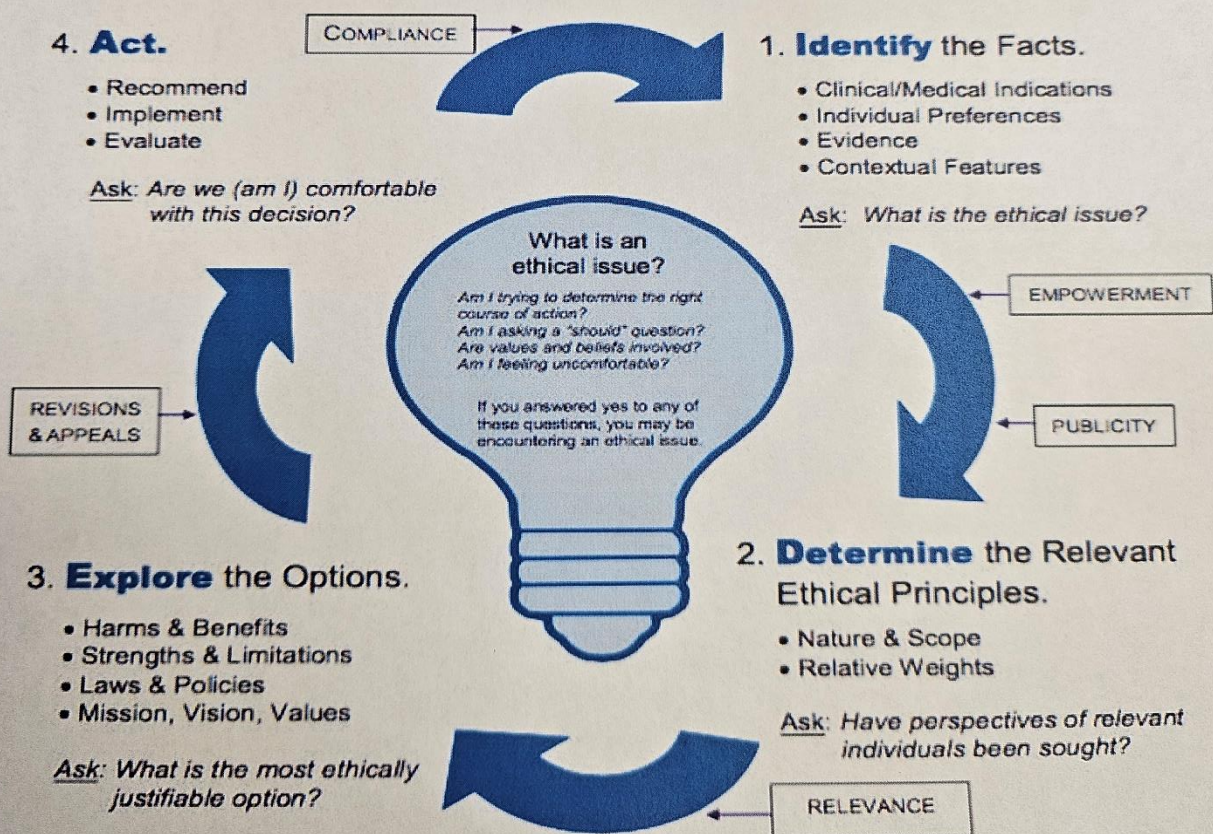
The **five process conditions** come from the Accountability for Reasonableness (A4R) framework developed by Daniels and Sabin (2002) and adapted by Gibson, Martin and Singer (2005). By applying these conditions to the way decisions are made, the process can be made more transparent, inclusive and fair.

The **diagram** below (Figure 1) aims to help show the decision-making steps and the good process conditions in one view. The **lightbulb** at the centre holds the kinds of questions that suggest there is an ethical issue involved, and in which situations a decision-making framework might be helpful. The **arrows** are a reminder that the process continues, with new information included in as it arises.

Figure 1

## IDEA:

### Ethical Decision-Making Framework



## The LTC Ethical Framework: IDEA Decision-Making Tool

### The four steps are:

1. Identify the facts.
2. Determine the relevant IPAC and ethical principles.
3. Explore the options
4. Act.
5. **The eight LTC ethical principles**
  1. Fairness;
  2. Equity;
  3. Transparency;
  4. Consideration of available evidence;
  5. Consideration of impacts of decisions on residents and staff;
  6. Resident quality of life as a primary driver
  7. Risk relative to reward of key decisions; and
  8. Safety.

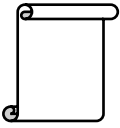

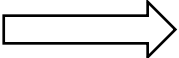
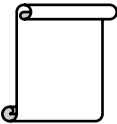

### The five process conditions for ethical decision-making include:

1. **Empowerment:** Include all those affected as much as possible. There should be efforts to minimize power differences in the decision-making context and to optimize effective opportunities for participation.
2. **Publicity:** Transparency is already included as a key principle. Ensure the process is transparent and accessible to the relevant public/stakeholders.
3. **Relevance:** Decisions should be made based on reasons (i.e., evidence, principles and arguments) that “fair-minded” people can agree are relevant under the circumstances.
4. **Revisions and Appeals:** Rethink a decision when appropriate. There should be opportunities to revisit and revise decisions in light of further evidence or arguments. There should be a mechanism for challenge and dispute resolution.
5. **Compliance:** Be accountable. Ensure the four other process conditions are met.

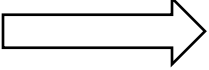
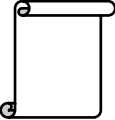

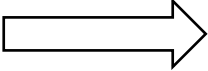
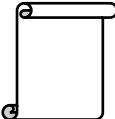

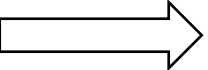
One other important part of ethical decision-making will be the Lakeland LTCH’s own guideposts – the mission, vision and values, and resident rights and responsibilities. These should be in mind when thinking through the ethics of difficult decisions.

## Step by Step Guidance

For each step in the framework, there are several guiding questions and/or considerations. This helps decide **what** to do, **why** it should be done, and **how** to do it. In the guidance below, each step of the framework is described, the relevant questions or considerations are suggested, and the corresponding process conditions are presented.

Step 1: Identify the Facts	
 Description	<p>The first step in the IDEA ethical decision-making process is <b>identification of the issue and facts</b>. By identifying the facts, we can flag the ethical tensions. This will help answer the first important question: “<b>What is the ethical issue that has been identified?</b>”</p>
 Questions or Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the relevant indications?</li> <li>• What are the preferences of the resident, family and/or staff?</li> <li>• What is the evidence?</li> <li>• What is the ethical issue?</li> </ul>
 Process conditions	<p><b>Empowerment</b> – It should be made possible for all those affected to have their concerns heard and understood. Opportunities should be created from the beginning for resident, staff and visitor participation and continue throughout the entire process.</p> <p><b>Publicity</b> – Engage in regular dialogue with stakeholders and discuss the decision-making process in an open and transparent manner; be inviting and accessible to questions and discussion.</p>
Step 2: Determine the ethical principles	
 Description	<p>Step 2 looks at the relevant ethical principles. <b>Fairness, Equity, Transparency, Available evidence, Impacts on residents and staff, Quality of life, Risks and rewards, and Safety</b>. Additional ethical principles include: <b>Autonomy</b> (individual self-determination), <b>Reciprocity</b> (if we decide to take away a right or something of value to a resident, make that burden as light as possible), and <b>Proportionality</b> (imposing the fewest restrictions required to achieve a desired objective).</p> <p>Weighing the potentially conflicting principles helps supply the “why” reasoning for the decision.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the most relevant ethical principles for this issue?</li> <li>• Have the ethical principles been considered from the viewpoint of all relevant people (residents, families, staff, visitors, etc.)?</li> </ul>



<p>Questions or considerations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do those involved agree on what is most important?</li> <li>• Are there any additional factors that should be considered?</li> </ul>
 <p>Process Conditions</p>	<p><b>Relevance</b> – decisions should be made based on what is seen by all as important given the current context.</p>
<p><b>Step 3: Explore the options</b></p>	
 <p>Description</p>	<p>Identification of potential options, with the LTC ethical principles in mind. Try and identify several options to address the ethical issue. The risks and rewards of the options should be considered, including their potential impacts.</p> <p>The LTC principles should be reviewed with each option. At the end, the most ethically justifiable option should be identified for implementation – this is “what” will be done to address the ethical issue.</p>
 <p>Questions or considerations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can be done? (Think broadly)</li> <li>• What is the risk/reward balance in each?</li> <li>• How do they align with LTC Ethical principles?</li> <li>• How will they affect residents, families, visitors and staff?</li> <li>• Are they supported by the evidence?</li> </ul>
 <p>Process Conditions</p>	<p><b>Revisions and Appeals:</b> There should be a plan or process to revise decisions once more information has come to light or there are additional arguments. There may be unforeseen impacts on residents providing ethical reasons to rethink or new options that may arise over time.</p>
<p><b>Step 4: Act</b></p>	
 <p>Description</p>	<p>This step includes implementing the most ethical option identified in Step 3. Decisions and processes used to arrive at a decision and the plan is then set and implemented. This step concentrates in the “how” of addressing the ethical issue and includes reviewing and evaluating to ensure that it is doing “what” was decided to be the best in an ethical manner.</p>
 <p>Questions or considerations</p>	<p>Select the best option based on information available after reviewing all potential options. While maintaining transparency in how the decision was made, the decision is now shared with stakeholders (e.g., resident, family, staff and LTCH leadership as well as resident and family councils). Implement the decision and evaluate its impacts.</p>
 <p>Process Conditions</p>	<p><b>Compliance:</b> Decision making process should be reviewed to ensure that all conditions have been met and this review can be carried out by those individuals directly involved in the decision-making process. Having this step completed by an individual or group is perceived as less biased.</p>

## Appendix A: Eight LTC Ethical Principles

The ethical framework under section 21.10 from IPAC LTC Standards, includes the following key IPAC principles:

**FAIRNESS:** Interrelated to equity, fairness supports a fair/impartial/just decision-making process that is free of bias and discrimination. Practically, this means that similar cases should be treated similarly and dissimilar cases should be treated in a way that reflects the dissimilarities. Fairness is closely related to the ethical principle of justice.

**EQUITY:** Promoting positive actions to improve health and minimize negative ones that would worsen existing harmful disparities. Apply a fair and consistent decision-making process, empower individuals to participate in the process, and fairly distribute benefits and burdens.

**TRANSPARENCY:** Communicate and make available decisions and their rationales. Provide information needed to make an informed decision including information about potential harms. Examples include providing accessible information and guidance for residents, staff and families that is easily understood.

**CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE EVIDENCE:** What does existing literature say about this topic? Is there available data or evidence, including real world evidence? If there is uncertainty or insufficient data or evidence, apply the precautionary principle. The precautionary principle provides guidance for situations of uncertainty. When evidence is uncertain (i.e., it is insufficient to demonstrate a cause and effect relationship), proceed slowly or incrementally until additional evidence exists to guide more decisive action.

**CONSIDERATION OF IMPACTS OF DECISION ON RESIDENTS AND STAFF:** Decisions should prevent or minimize harm, promote well-being and maximize good. Considerations include, but are not limited to, infection prevention (will it prevent cases?), infection control (will it control spread?), health vulnerabilities, resident care needs, mental health and quality of life.

**RESIDENT QUALITY OF LIFE AS A PRIMARY DRIVER:** Recognize and promote the inherent dignity and autonomy of residents by exploring with the resident or their Substitute Decision-Maker what is most important to them. Determination of quality of life in LTCH often includes considerations of security, comfort, meaningful activity, relationships, enjoyment, dignity, autonomy, privacy, individuality, spiritual well-being and maximizing functional competence.

**RISK RELATIVE TO REWARD OF KEY DECISIONS:** The potential harm of an action should be compared to the potential benefit from that action. Whenever possible, promote the greatest amount of benefit and the least amount of harm.

**SAFETY:** Promote a just culture that reports safety incidents and near misses, learns from the past incidents, and continually strives to improve the environment of the LTCH to eliminate avoidable harm.

## Appendix B: IPAC LTC Ethics – IDEA Worksheet

Date used: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 1: Identify the Facts

*What is the ethical issue that has been identified?*

*What are the relevant indications?*

*What are the resident / staff / families preferences?*

*What is the presenting ethical issue?*

**Step 2: Determine the Relevant Ethical Principles**

*Who is affected by this issue (relevant parties)?*

*Of the eight LTC ethical principles, what are the 3-5 most relevant ones for this situation (see Appendix A for definitions) Principles include: Fairness, Equity, Transparency, Evidence, Impact, Quality of Life, Risk to Reward and Safety.*

*Identify any additional relevant ethical principles:*

*Notes:*

*Are there any other factors that need to be considered?*



**Step 3: Explore the Options**

<i>Option 1:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Consistant with ethical principles identified	<i>Option 2:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent with ethical principles identified	<i>Option 3:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent with ethical principles identified
<i>Benefits/Strengths:</i>	<i>Benefits/Strengths:</i>	<i>Benefits/Strengths:</i>
<i>Risk/Rewards:</i>	<i>Risk/Rewards:</i>	<i>Risk/Rewards:</i>
<i>Additional Resources Used (list):</i>	<i>Additional Resources Used (list):</i>	<i>Additional Resources Used (list):</i>

What is the most ethically justifiable option?

**Step 4: Act**

*Documentation of Decision:*

*Implementation Plan:*

*Evaluation Plan:*













*Reviewed by:*

*Date:*

*Time:*

## Appendix C: Summary of IDEA Ethical Framework

Step 1: Identify the facts

 Description	<b>“What is the ethical issue that has been identified?”</b> Identification of the ethical issue and facts to flag the ethical tensions
 Questions or considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the ethical issue?</li> <li>• What are the relevant indications?</li> <li>• What are the preferences of the resident, family and/or staff?</li> <li>• What is the evidence?</li> </ul>
 Process Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Empowerment</b> – Encourage participation by all those who may be affected by the decision</li> <li>• <b>Publicity</b> – Ensure the process is transparent and accessible to all stakeholders</li> </ul>
Step 2: <b>Determine the ethical principles</b>	
 Description	<b>“What are the ethical principles that should be considered?”</b> Consider relevant ethical principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fairness</b> – Decision-making process free of bias and discrimination</li> <li>• <b>Equity</b> – Improve health while minimizing negative actions that worsen disparities</li> <li>• <b>Transparency</b> – Communicate and make available decisions and rationales</li> <li>• <b>Available evidence</b> – Existing literature and evidence (including real-world experience)</li> <li>• <b>Impacts</b> – Minimize harm and maximize good for all residents and staff</li> <li>• <b>Resident quality of life</b> – Respecting resident values, preferences and autonomy</li> <li>• <b>Risks to rewards</b> – Balancing possible harms with possible benefits</li> <li>• <b>Safety</b> – Promoting culture of continuous improvement where staff feel comfortable to raise concerns and learn from previous experiences</li> </ul> Additional ethical principles ( <b>Autonomy, Reciprocity, Proportionality</b> ) may apply as well.
 Questions or considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the most relevant ethical principles for this issue?</li> <li>• Have the ethical principles been considered from the viewpoint of all relevant people (residents, families, staff, visitors, etc.)</li> <li>• Do those involved agree on what is important?</li> <li>• Are there any additional factors that should be considered?</li> </ul>
 Process Conditions	<b>Relevance</b> – Decisions are made based on reasons that stakeholders agree are relevant.
Step 3: <b>Explore the options</b>	
 Description	<b>“What are the potential options to address the ethical issue?”</b> Try and identify several options to address the ethical issue. The principles from Step 2 should be reviewed with each option. At the end, the most ethically justifiable option(s) should be identified for implementation.
 Questions or considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can be done? Think as broadly as possible</li> <li>• What is the risk/reward balance in each?</li> <li>• How do they align with ethical principles identified in Step 2?</li> <li>• How will they affect residents, families/visitors and staff?</li> <li>• Are they supported by the evidence?</li> <li>• </li> </ul>
 Process Conditions	<b>Revisions and appeals</b> – Allow opportunities to revisit and revise decisions as new evidence or new arguments arise
Step 4: <b>Act</b>	
 Description	<b>“How do we implement and evaluate the selected action?”</b> The most ethically justifiable option identified in Step 3 is recommended for implementation. The decision and the process used to arrive at the decision should be documented. A plan is set and implemented. The action plan should be reviewed and evaluated to confirm it is both effective and ethical.
 Questions or considerations	Following a review of the potential options, select the best option based on the available information. Maintain transparency in how the decision was made, and share the decision and process with stakeholders. Implement the decision and evaluate its impacts.
 Process Conditions	<b>Compliance</b> – The decision-making process should be reviewed to ensure that all of the conditions have been satisfactorily met.