



*Please note: The policy description, purpose and definitions are harmonized across the Huron Perth & Area Ontario Health Team Accreditation Collaborative.*

## Ethics Policy

### Purpose

Ethical principles and processes provide a standardized and fair approach to working through ethical issues encountered in the delivery of healthcare and guides decision-making and actions about ethical issues. Different ethical frameworks may be adopted to achieve this purpose.

### Scope

Each organization will maintain a process to identify, provide guidance for ethical practice and decision-making and record all ethics-related activities. The process and/or framework will align with legislation, standards of regulated colleges, and best practice; and be publicly accessible. Ethical principles will be incorporated in policies and procedures, and experience of ethical issues will inform quality improvement initiatives.

### Definitions of Ethical Principles

- **Autonomy:** the right to self-determination, independence and freedom. Involves the provider's willingness to provide information to the individual so that they may make informed decisions and subsequently respect an individual's right to choose what is right for themselves, even if the provider does not agree with the decision. Informed Consent is an example of how this principle is applied.
- **Beneficence:** to "do good". Requires providers to perform acts that will benefit patients/clients/residents. Good care requires that the provider understands the patient/client/resident from a holistic perspective that respects the individual's beliefs, feelings, wishes and values, as well as those of their family or significant others. Beneficence involves acting in ways that demonstrate caring, listening, and supporting.
- **Confidentiality:** the obligation to keep patient/client/resident information confidential. Professional standards and privacy legislation provide guidance on the conditions under which health information can be ethically and legally disclosed.
- **Fidelity:** faithfulness to the relationship and/or the provider's role. Persons must act in accordance with their respective roles.
- **Informed Consent:** to protect the autonomy of patients/clients/residents. Consent must be voluntary, free of coercion and with an adequate disclosure of information.
- **Justice:** the obligation to be fair to all people, regardless of their race, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, medical diagnosis, social standing, economic level, or religious beliefs. The principle of justice includes distributive justice such as equal access to and fair allocation of resources and procedural justice, or shared decision-making, including people in the decisions that affect them.
- **Non-Maleficence:** protection from harm. This requires that providers do not harm

their patients/clients/residents, Staff are expected to identify hazards in the workplace may put the patients/clients/residents at risk and act to prevent harm.

- **Paternalism:** the practice of controlling, monitoring or deciding what is good for an individual rather than letting them choose for themselves. This includes restricting someone's freedom to act to prevent them from harming themselves (e.g. restraints, suicide prevention) and restricting someone's autonomy. Paternalism is rarely justifiable with a mentally competent adult.
- **Quality of life:** the principle that mere biological existence does not in itself have value; rather that life gives rise to activities and experiences which provide pleasure, satisfaction and well-being. The person whose life is in question is the only reliable judge of that life's quality.
- **Sanctity of life:** the principle that every life is of equal and infinite value. In its utmost form (vitalism), this principle would be upheld at all costs, no matter the degree of quality. A more moderate interpretation is that life has instrumental value (to carry out a purpose).
- **Veracity:** being truthful or not intentionally misleading or deceiving clients. Open and honest communication that helps patients/clients/residents deal with the anxiety this information may create. Concealing or guarding patients/clients/residents from the truth to "protect" them is rarely ethically justifiable.

**HPA-OHT Accreditation organizations will include an organization-specific addendum to the harmonized policy to address their respective processes.**