

MCH Healthcare Ethics Committee

- **What is the Ethics Committee?**

The MCH Healthcare Ethics Committee provides support and help to the MCH community among those seeking to resolve uncertainty or conflict regarding value-laden or ethical concerns that emerge in the delivery of healthcare. The committee also serves to educate the staff on issues related to healthcare ethics and is involved in the development of policies with regards to patient care.

- **Why make a request?**

If the staff, the healthcare team, the patient, and the patient's family have unresolved or ethically challenging questions, have ethical issues that they feel are not being addressed, then a call to the ethics committee is appropriate. Discussions with the committee can be helpful and reassuring to the concerned parties especially when difficult choices must be made.

- **When can one make a request?**

You can make a request when you think that the service will be of help. Sometimes, an answer to a question is all you need.

- **Who can make a request?**

Patients, surrogates, family members, health care providers and any employee of the hospital can make a request. If the healthcare team, the patient, or the patient's family has an unresolved ethical question or concern, then the ethics committee may be consulted.

- **What are some examples that one may need help in decision making?**

- Do not resuscitate orders
- Initiation/continuation/withdrawal of life support; nutrition and hydration
- Conflict between religious values and treatment plans
- Who has the right to make decisions
- Conflict between family members about treatment plan
- Questions about advance directives
- Moral distress about ethical issues

- Palliative care issues
- Other ethical issues

- **What happens when a request is made?**

All consultations are treated in a confidential manner. Once a request is made, the ethics consultant will gather basic information from the requestor and other parties involved in the case, which may include the patient's physicians, nursing staff, family members, social workers, clergy, as deemed appropriate. The patient's medical treatment and options, as well as the concerns and feelings of involved parties are then reviewed. The consultant, and other members of the ethics committee, will meet with concerned parties where options are reviewed.

The ethics committee is advisory only. Final decisions are made by the patient, the family and the health care team.

- **Who are the members of the ethics committee?**

The committee is composed of individuals from different health care disciplines such as physicians, clergy, nurses, social workers and administrative staff. The community is also represented by community members.

- **How to access the ethics committee?**

There is a toll-free line that one can access 24 hours a day. We will typically respond within 24 hours. During weekends and holidays, we will respond on the next business day. 924.1710

Since the committee is staffed by volunteers, we may not be able to offer consults on an emergency basis.