

## **Ethics Consult Service**

### **For help when making difficult decisions**

#### **What is an ethical dilemma?**

It can be hard to make decisions about your child's health care. Some decisions may involve your values about what is best for your child and you. Sometimes, you may not know what is best for your child. You may have different ideas than your child's health care team. Sometimes you have to make a choice but all the choices seem just as good or bad. This is called an "ethical dilemma." These decisions can be stressful, scary, and confusing.

When facing an ethical dilemma, you might need time to think. You might want to talk to others for their help and advice. In some cases there is no right or wrong choice.

#### **What is the Ethics Consult Service?**

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin has an Ethics Advisory Committee. Members of this committee serve on an Ethics Consult Service. The Ethics Consult Service can help patients, families and health care providers with ethical decisions about a child's plan of care.

#### **When would an ethics consult be helpful?**

Choices about your child's care are not always easy. An ethics consult may help if it is hard to figure out the best choice. Here are some examples:

- You are not sure what decision is best for your child.
- You cannot decide how much you should tell your child.
- Your religious or spiritual beliefs don't support the suggested treatment plan.
- You and your child do not agree about the suggested treatment plan.
- Health care team members do not agree about how to help your child.
- You and your health care team do not agree about how to help your child.

#### **When would an ethics consult not be helpful?**

- If you need medical advice or have questions about medical care. Ask someone from your health care team for help.
- If you need religious or spiritual help. You can call 414-266-2000 and ask for the chaplain on call.
- If you are feeling scared or are not sure about how to take care of your child and where to go for needs outside the hospital. You can call 414-266-2000 and ask for the social worker on call.
- If you are upset about the care your child received in the hospital. Call Patient Relations at 414-266-7848.

## **Who are the Ethics Advisory Committee?**

The Ethics Advisory Committee is made up of nurses, doctors, social workers, chaplains and community members. They are concerned about ethics in children's health care. They are not part of your child's health care team.

## **How does an ethics consult work?**

You will meet with a small number (3-5) of Ethics Advisory Committee members and members of your child's health care team. They might include nurses, doctors, physical/occupational therapists, social workers, or chaplains. Members of the Ethics Consult Service group will:

- Learn more about your child.
- Try to understand how you feel.
- Describe the ethical questions or issues.
- Talk about thoughts or ideas with family and care providers.
- Talk about the choices you have.

The consult service group provides advice and does not take sides. The final decisions about the health care plan are between the patient, family and health care team.

## **Who can ask for an ethics consult?**

Patients, parents, guardians, involved family members or the health care team can ask for an ethics consult.

## **Does the health care team support ethics consults?**

Yes. Talking openly is important at our hospital. Your thoughts and worries should be respected by everyone on your child's health care team. Asking for an ethics consult will not change how your child is treated. Talking with a group may help everyone to understand each other better.

## **How do I reach the Ethics Consult Service?**

- Call the hospital operator or ask someone you trust to call for you.
  - Dial "0" within the hospital.
  - Dial 414-266-2000 from outside the hospital.
- Ask for an ethics consult.
- The operator will take your name and phone number.
- A member of the ethics consult service will call you back within 24 hours.

## **Will I be charged for the Ethics Consult Service?**

There is no cost to you or your health care team for this service.

## **What do I do if I have questions after the ethics consult?**

You may ask any member of your health care team. Or talk to the Ethics Consult Service team leader who was a part of your child's ethics consult. You may also reach the Ethics Advisory Committee chairperson by calling Medical Staff Services at 414-266-2400.

**This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**