

Ethics Discernment Framework

PRE-WORK

1. Determine scope of authority
2. Identify stakeholders using subsidiarity
3. Commit to self-awareness (hopes, fears, biases)
4. Probability analysis on likely options

PRE-WORK

ANALYZE THE OPTIONS

1. Outline the benefits and challenges of each possible option
2. Describe how each option aligns with or hinders our Mission and Values
3. How does each option impact those who are vulnerable?
4. Which options help us become who we are called to be?

DECIDE

1. Which option best exemplifies who we are called to be?
2. Gauge agreement
3. Identify measurable outcomes
4. Assign implementation steps

CLARIFY THE CENTRAL QUESTION

CLARIFY THE CENTRAL QUESTION

1. Who is God calling us to be?
2. Identify relevant facts
3. What values or standards provide guidance? (ERDs, codes of ethics, community values, etc.)

REFLECT

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1. Reflect or pray on the options in silence.
2. What biases might be clouding my thoughts?
3. What has been overlooked or needs deeper consideration?
4. Which option am I most at peace with?

DECIDE

ASSESS

ASSESS

1. Schedule a time to assess outcomes and revise the implementation plan

Ethics Discernment Framework

WHAT

The CommonSpirit Ethics Discernment Framework is a standard deliberative process and spiritual exercise for leaders, Executive Teams, and Boards to use when making decisions.

- First, ask **“Who is God calling us to be?”** as an organization or a team
- Then, answer **“What are we going to do?”**

WHY

Using the Ethics Discernment Framework intentionally and consistently allows us to:

- Help leaders make decisions that flow from our Mission and Values
- Identify and adequately address logical and logistical pitfalls of organizational decisions to promote **Excellence**
- Live out **Integrity** by keeping our Mission and Values at the center of who we are as CommonSpirit Health
- Identify, analyze, and resolve [biases](#) and obstacles to successful decisions
- Avoid hasty decisions: fast = mental shortcuts = omissions and oversights
- Create a space to engage in meaningful deliberation grounded in trust and **Compassion**

HOW

Use the Discernment Framework in the way that best fits the situation.

As a Team

- Use the Process as a team, department, or working group
- Identify someone to lead the discernment
- Especially suited for Routine Decisions (see WHEN)

With a Facilitator

- Request a trained facilitator to lead the discernment and serve as an impartial guide
- Facilitators identify unspoken assumptions and ask the difficult questions to prompt self-reflection
- Expected for Key Decisions (see WHEN)

Adapt a Pre-existing Process

- To increase agility, work with the Theology and Ethics Department to integrate elements of the Ethics Discernment Framework into your team or department's typical decision making process
- Examples include finance, strategy at the national office

WHO

Use subsidiarity to identify the right participants for successful discernment.

- Subsidiarity - an ethical principle that states decisions should be made at the lowest appropriate level, as close to the issue as possible.
- Invite stakeholders based on role and perspective, some to be present and some to provide input and viewpoints, to foster **Collaboration**
- **Inclusion** calls us to identify participants who are diverse in background, experience, profession, and level of the organization
- Include enough participants to represent relevant viewpoints but not so many that it restricts agility
- Pay specific attention to how each option will impact those who are vulnerable

WHEN

Examples of when to use this framework include:

Routine decisions

- Difference of opinion - team members or subject matter experts disagree about the best way forward
- Policies - how does our Mission call us to go beyond the industry standard?
- RFPs - identify values relevant to choose between top candidates
- Unease - a decision or proposed solution might cause discomfort or misgivings
- Uncertainty - choosing between multiple options, all of which are good

Key decisions

- Collaborative arrangements - acquisitions, divestitures, growth, joint ventures, mergers, partnerships, etc.
- Communications - internal or external communication strategies or marketing campaigns
- Finance - budgets, capital allocation, or investment strategies
- Human resources - benefits changes, compensation policies, outsourcing, difficult terminations, or RIFs or restructurings over 1,000 employees or 10% of staff
- Operations - addition, expansion, or decrease of key services, closing or opening a facility or service line, one time capital expenditures over \$10 million
- Population health - creation of shared savings plans, clinically integrated networks, or changing member benefits
- Strategic plans - development and implementation
- Any decision or action of critical significance for the ministry or organization