

# Six Steps To Resolve Ethical Dilemmas

## 1. Identify the Problem

- A. Gather as much relevant information as possible.
- B. Talk to the parties involved.
- C. Clarify if the problem is legal, moral, ethical or a combination.

## 2. Identify the Potential Issues Involved

- A. List and describe the critical issues.
- B. Evaluate the rights, responsibilities and welfare of those affected by the decision.
- C. Consider basic moral principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice.  
Identify any competing principles.
- D. Ascertain the potential dangers to the individuals, department or college.

## 3. Review Your Organization's Code of Ethics, Policies and Relevant Laws

## 4. Evaluate Potential Courses of Action

- A. Brainstorm ideas.
- B. Enumerate the outcomes of various decisions.
- C. Consider the consequences of inaction.
- D. Contemplate how you will feel about yourself when all is done.

## 5. Obtain Consultation

- A. Colleagues or a supervisor can add an outside perspective. It's a serious warning sign if you don't want to talk to another person about actions you are contemplating.
- B. You must be able to justify a course of action based on sound reasoning which you can test out in the consultation.

## 6. Determine the Best Course of Action

- A. Map out the best way to resolve the problem (e.g., who should be contacted first if multiple parties are involved? Do you need outside support? Do you need to talk to a supervisor?).
- B. Then consider who, if anyone, should know about the problem (such as a work supervisor, friend, administrator or colleague).