

Shannex Six-Step Process of Ethical Clinical Decision-Making

(adapted from Purtilo, 2005)

Step 1: Get the Story Straight – Gather Relevant Information

Clinical Indicators:

What is the diagnosis or prognosis?	
Is the illness or condition reversible?	
Is life-saving treatment medically futile?	
What is the present care plan?	
What is the usual plan of care /interventions for this situation?	
What is needed to relieve suffering or to provide comfort and safety?	
What and how can you learn about this client's medical and social history? Are there any traditions or cultural influences?	

Preference of the Client /Substitute Decision Maker:

What does the client/ Substitute Decision Maker (SDM) want in this situation?	
Who has communicated the options to the client? (Physician, SW, Licensed Staff, PT, OT, Recreation, Dietitian)	
What forum was used or should be used to communicate information? (e.g. special CCC, meetings, etc.)	
What was the client/SDM actually told? What options were discussed?	
What evidence do you have that what the client/SDM said has been heard by key decision makers?	
Does he or she have capacity to make decisions about this situation?	
If the client lacks capacity is there a Personal Care Directive, or other document indicating his/her preferences?	
If the client lacks capacity is there a legal substitute decision maker?	

Quality of Life:

What are the client's beliefs and values that make up his or her personal value system?	
What quality of life considerations are the decision makers bringing to this situation, and how are their biases influencing the processes?	
How is the client's quality of life affected?	

Contextual Factors:

What institutional policies may influence what can be done?	
What are the legal implications regarding this issue?	
Are resources an issue? How will these services be paid for?	

Step 2: Review Values/Code of Ethics and Ethical Principles

- Shannex Values
- Code of Ethics for your profession
- Ethical Principles (As noted below)

Step 3: Identify the Possible Solutions *(Brainstorm the possible solutions)*

Based on this situation, how do the ethical principles apply and what are the possible solutions?

"above all do no harm" – Non-maleficence	
Prevent harm, remove harm when being inflicted and bring about good -Beneficence	
Respect for persons. Assumes a competent person is free to determine a self-chosen plan unless that plan interferes with the rights of others -Autonomy	
How we treat individuals and groups within society, fairly distribute benefits and burdens and compensate those who've been unfairly treated - Justice	

Step 4: Identify the Best Practical Solutions Within Your Means and Job Description

Please Note: An optimizing solution is one that looks at the best alternatives for the long-term. It is not necessarily the quickest or easiest solution. In contrast a satisfying solution only looks at satisfying the immediate needs or demands.

What you are going to do?	How you are going to do it?

Step 5: Action/Intervention

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Step 6: Evaluate the Process and Outcome *(Reflect on and evaluate the action)*

What did you do well and why?	
What were the most challenging aspects of this situation?	
How did this situation compare with others you encountered/read about?	
To what other kind of situations will your experience with this one apply?	
What was the most helpful?	
What does the client/family/SDM have to say about your actions?	
Overall, what did you learn?	