



**Ask4Care Support Services Inc.**

**Ethics Framework**



## Ethics Framework

<u>SECTION:</u>	<u>SUBJECT:</u>	<u>REF:</u> APF-2511
Ethics Framework	Accreditation_Primer_2025_A4 C\Accreditation Plans and Frameworks Documents/ Accreditation_Pre_Survey Documents	<u>DATE:</u> April 22,2025

**Purpose of the Ethics Framework:** This tool will assist Ask4Care management, employees, staff members, and stakeholders in ethical decision making.

Process of addressing ethical issues at Ask4Care:

1. Identifying the ethical issue
2. Addressing the ethical issue in discussion with the management team
3. Developing solutions
4. Discussing and analyzing the most ideal and appropriate solution
5. Reviewing and analyzing results

**Accessibility of the Ethics Framework:** The ethics framework is available in hardcopy at all Ask4Care office locations and in a digital format is accessible on our main website [www.ask4care.com](http://www.ask4care.com).

### Common Ethical Dilemmas/Issues that may arise at Ask4Care:

- Client preferences for staff based on gender (male vs female).
- Client preferences for internal staff vs agency staff.
- Scheduling/removing staff who have missing/expired documents.
- Maintaining, withholding, and providing confidential personnel or client information.
- Meeting requests from staff for payrate increases based on non work related reasons
- Providing 24/7 on-call services for clients while maintaining employee health and wellness.

Ethical issues can arise in day-to-day activities for management, staff, and employees and other stakeholders which include but are not limited to the following areas:

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- Accounting, Invoices, and Payments
- Recruitment
- Scheduling
- Sales and Marketing
- Client Retention
- Human Resources
- Management

## **Ask4Care Vision, Mission, and Values**

### **Our Vision**

To emerge as the most trusted, reliable, efficient, and cost – effective provider of healthcare support services throughout North America.

### **Our Mission**

To work relentlessly to win the hearts and minds of every community member that needs support by providing top notch care that exceeds the expectations of our valued clientele throughout North America while maintaining the goals, vision, and values of our stakeholders.

### **Values**

- Respect
- Integrity
- Cultural diversity
- Tolerance
- Reliability
- Simplicity
- Accuracy

## **Ask4Care Code of Conduct**

### **1. Conflicts of Interest:**

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Conflicts of interest can be defined as an occurrence where personal, private, or organizational values and goals interfere or influence the completion or action of one's duties or tasks.

There are many forms in which conflicts of interest can occur, with some common types that you may encounter during your work, such as individual financial gains, using your position for an unfair advantage, using and providing confidential information for personal use, and post-employment decisions.

An example of a conflict of interest for an Ask4Care Recruitment and Scheduling Consultant would be to take bribes/gifts from a healthcare staff member and in exchange, provide the staff with a higher number of shifts as compared to others.

It should be noted that this should NOT be allowed because:

- It undermines trust and professionalism.
- Damages the reputation of our company.
- Unethical and is unfair to other staff and employees.
- It is against the core values of our company.

In working at Ask4Care, it is recommended to avoid any potential conflicts of interest, by preferably taking one of the following actions:

- A. Clearly state any potential conflicts of interest when taking on a client, staff member, a responsibility, or task.
- B. Avoid participating, accepting, or engaging in activities in which conflicts of interests can occur.

## **2. Dispute Resolution:**

Regrettably, conflicts can occur in any working environment. To resolve a conflict in an expedient, yet fair manner, Ask4Care recommends the following process for conflict or dispute resolution.

- Speak to the person you are having the dispute with in consultation with your Team Lead. Many times, disputes arise due to misunderstandings and miscommunications.
- If speaking to the individual does not work, speak to the Regional Care Manager. They will arrange a meeting between those involved in the dispute after fact finding, to determine a resolution.
- If the RCM is unable to resolve a workplace dispute, the parties may be referred to mediation by an outside third party. The resolution of the mediator is binding on both parties of the dispute.

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### **3. Confidentiality:**

#### Confidential Information

From time to time, employees of Ask4Care may encounter confidential information, including but not limited to information about Ask4Care's members, clients, finances, business plans etc. Employees are required to keep any such matters that may be disclosed to them or learned by them strictly confidential.

Furthermore, any such confidential information, obtained through employment with Ask4Care, must not be used by an employee for personal gain or to further an outside enterprise.

#### Intellectual Property

Any intellectual property, such as trademarks, copyrights and patents, and any work created by an employee in the course of employment at Ask4Care shall be the property of Ask4Care and the employee is deemed to have waived all rights in favour of Ask4Care. Work, for the purpose of this policy refers to written, creative or media work. All source material used in presentation or written documents must be acknowledged.

#### IT Information Storage and Security

Any storage devices (CD's, USB's, External hard drives) used by employees at Ask4Care's office locations, acknowledge that these devices and their contents are the property of Ask4Care. Furthermore, it should be understood by employees, that company equipment should be used only for company operations during working hours. Downloading of personal materials on company equipment can be harmful to said equipment and is not allowed.

### **4. Harassment:**

Ask4Care maintains a zero tolerance policy against harassment of any kind to ensure employees and volunteers have a safe and comfortable work environment. Mutual respect, along with cooperation and understanding, must be the basis of interaction between all stakeholders at Ask4Care. Ask4Care will neither tolerate nor condone behaviour that is likely to undermine the dignity or self-esteem of an individual, or create an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

There are several forms of harassment, but all can be defined as any unwelcome action by any person, whether verbal or physical, on a single or repeated basis, which humiliates insults or degrades. "Unwelcome", for the purpose of this policy, refers to any action which the harasser knows or ought to reasonably know is not desired by the victim of the harassment.

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Specifically, racial harassment is defined as any unwelcome comments, racist statements, slurs, jokes, graffiti or literature or pictures and posters which may intentionally or unintentionally offend another person.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted attention of a sexual nature such as remarks about appearance or personal life, offensive written or visual actions like graffiti or degrading pictures, physical contact of any kind, or sexual demands.

## **5. Discrimination**

### **NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY**

Non-Discriminatory Policy states that discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, language, national origin, disability, age, marital status, sexual orientation, economic or social situation, political or other opinion, or genetic information, against any individual is illegal and will not be tolerated at Ask4Care.

### **Ethics Training**

- Ethics training to be provided to staff, employees, and management can take the form of workshops, role play simulations, and e-learning modules (Salmela Talent, 2018), depending on availability and accessibility of the type of training.
- Ethics training for Ask4Care staff includes ensuring a thorough commitment and understanding of our company values, code of ethics, and code of conduct.

### **Rewarding Ethical Behaviour**

In promoting ethical behaviours for all staff and employees at Ask4Care, we pride ourselves to reward staff members through employee recognition programs (ex. Employee of the Month awards) and continuing to retain hard-working employees that have strong ethical values which align with the core values of Ask4Care.

### **Reporting Mechanisms**

Ask4Care endeavours to promote a reliable and effective reporting mechanism system that allows staff, employees, clients, and other stakeholders to feel safe in reporting any potential ethical issues/dilemmas. To this regard, Ask4Care utilizes the following reporting mechanism methods:

- Regular employee interview questioning and check-ins.
- Swift availability of management team to deal with queries and propose solutions
- Secure email, text, and phone call systems.
- In-person discussions and meetings at our Brampton, Toronto, and Barrie offices.

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- 24/7 On-Call client and staff services with a live Ask4Care employee to report any issues and problems.

Based on our discussion and severity of the ethical issue/dilemma, we will conduct a thorough internal investigation to validate the concerns Ahmed, J. (2019). A formal report will be created by the current Ask4Care Team Lead – Healthcare Operations, which will then be submitted for review by the manager and board of directors. The Ask4Care Ethics Framework Worksheet will be completed alongside the report to document how the ethical issue was identified and addressed, along with the results of the decision.

Ask4Care promises to uphold confidentiality throughout the investigation and only disclose information on an as needed basis with consultation with management. The reporting staff or employee will be made aware of the decision and results of the investigation.

### Ask4Care Ethics Framework Worksheet

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Ethics Framework and Worksheet 2025

<b>CARE Ethical Decision-Making Worksheet</b>	
<b>Consider ethical issues and values</b>	
Consider the issue at hand and identify the reason(s) why you believe it is an ethical issue/dilemma.	
Clearly state the question or dilemma: “Given [the issue, situation, or conflict], what decisions or actions are ethically justifiable?”	
<b>Review Ask4Care organizational values, vision, and mission:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Respect</li> <li>2. Integrity</li> <li>3. Cultural diversity</li> <li>4. Tolerance</li> <li>5. Reliability</li> <li>6. Simplicity</li> <li>7. Accuracy</li> </ol>	<b>Identify and list personal and organizational principles, duties, and values relevant to the current situation/problem at hand.</b>  <b>Principles:</b>

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<p><b>Determine the relevant legal requirements, professional standards, and policies.</b></p> <p><b>Legal Policies &amp; Acts to consider include:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Occupational Health &amp; Safety Act (OHSA)</li> <li>2. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)</li> <li>3. Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)</li> <li>4. Workplace Internal Responsibility System (IRS)</li> <li>5. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</li> <li>6. Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Are key values, duties, principles, or standards in conflict?</b></p>	
<p><b>Assess potential options with stakeholders</b></p>	
<p><b>Determine best process for resolution and key stakeholders involved.</b></p>	



**Considerations include:**

1. In-person vs online/virtual meetings
2. Communication tools such as voting/ballots, brainstorming, discussion groups, and polls.
3. Feedback and complaints processes

**Stakeholder perspectives (staff, clients, community, partners, etc.)**

**Evidence (risks, benefits, impact on quality of services, best practices)**

**Resource implications (human and financial) if any:**

**Contextual factors (social, cultural, religious, past cases, legal considerations, internal and external directives)**

**Options**

**Strengths**

**Weaknesses**

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Respond and act based on best possible course of action.		
What are the possible harms/benefits to different stakeholders of the options?		
Consider the probable option with best consequences and alignment with duties, principles, and values.		
State clear reasons for your choice; anticipate questions and criticism.		
Evaluate results		
Identify how best to implement, communicate, and document the decision.		
Reflect on the decision and the process. What lessons could be learned for future cases?		

Does this situation point to a systems or organizational cultural problem (e.g. policy gap)?

Source: Adapted from Hamilton Health Sciences Ethics Framework (2010)

### References

- Accreditation Canada (2016). *Plans and frameworks guide*.
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- Community Ethics Network (2008). *Ethical decision-making in the community health and support sector: Community ethics toolkit*. <https://www.hhr-rhs.ca/images/stories/toolkit2008.pdf>
- Hamilton Health Sciences (2010). *Hamilton Health Sciences Ethics Framework*.
- McDonald, M. (n.d.). *Ethics and conflict of interest*. The University of British Columbia. <https://ethics.ubc.ca/people/mcdonaldconflict-html/>



Salmela Talent (2023). *Work ethics: How to develop a strong ethical framework for your organization.* <https://meetsalmela.com/work-ethics-framework-for-your-organization/>

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