

Career Profile BIOETHICIST

What is a Bioethicist? – Career Description/Scope

Bioethicists are unregulated health professionals who support the improvement of patient care by assisting patients, families, staff, physicians, students & volunteers resolve ethical issues.

Education Requirements to Work in Ontario

- Graduate degree in or related to bioethics
- Most practicing bioethicists will also have completed a fellowship in clinical & organizational ethics

Bioethicist Practice Requirements

- Bioethicists are expected to keep current with the bioethics literature in order to appropriately inform their practice, as well as to be knowledgeable of applicable health care legislation and policy.

How does a Bioethicist Practice at TBRHSC?

- Ethical dilemmas can arise at any point along the continuum of care & within each area of the organization. They are often complex & value laden.
- The Bioethicist works independently and in conjunction with the Operational Ethics Committee at TBRHSC to support ethical decision-making and discernment within the organization. Relevant ethical questions, issues, or concerns can be clinical and/or organizational in nature.
- Anyone with an ethics related question or struggling with a complex decision can contact the Bioethicist directly, through Quality & Risk Management, or via Switchboard.
- The Bioethicist role at TBRHSC is situated within the Quality & Risk Management Department.

What does a Bioethicist Do?

- Bioethicists have been trained to identify & help understand ethical problems.
- They are a resource for anyone with an ethics question or struggling with a complex value based decision.
- Bioethicists employ reasoned and systematic techniques grounded in ethical theory and relevant stakeholder values to help guide decision-making and practices. When the right course of action is unclear, or there is disagreement, Bioethicists can help support the process for decision-making and those responsible for making the decision to arrive at an outcome that is informed and appropriate.



- Bioethicists provide: consultation - clinically & organizationally (policy QM90), education – formal & informal, and support for policy review/development.
- Ethics consultations are tailored to fit the needs of the requestor(s) and can be held one on one or as a group. While open discussion among all those involved is encouraged, confidential consultations are available. Consultations can address clinical as well as organizational/management based scenarios and can be held as the situation unfolds or after the situation has passed in a debrief format. Ethics consultation can be requested 24-7/365 via Switchboard.

Web Resources

- Canadian Bioethics Society <http://www.bioethics.ca/>
- American Society for Bioethics and Humanities <http://www.asbh.org/>

