



Cota Ethics Framework

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Cota's Ethics Framework

A. / INTRODUCTION

Cota is committed to providing a workplace with an ethical culture and a commitment to good practice. It is the responsibility of all Cota employees, students, volunteers, contracted agents and Board of Directors to operate in an ethical manner. In doing so, Cota has established a framework which outlines the guiding ethical values for service delivery, worker interactions, service planning and our involvement in research.

Our approach to Ethics includes key processes in the following areas:

1. Orientation
2. Decision-Making Processes
3. Research
4. Organizational Support

B. / FRAMEWORK

B1. ORIENTATION

All Cota employees, volunteers, students and contracted agents (workers) will receive orientation to Cota's Ethics Framework upon commencing involvement with the agency.

Cota's Ethics Framework will also be readily available on Cota's website and intranet.

B2. DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

i) Clinical

We have provided a Clinical Ethics Toolkit to assist service providers who are facing ethical dilemmas in service provision. The toolkit may be used independently and/or with the support of colleagues and the manager.

The objective of this toolkit is to assist Service Providers by:

- Increasing awareness and understanding of ethics in working with our clients
- Improving ability to identify ethical issues when encountered
- Increasing ability to identify and access other stakeholders, if appropriate
- Increasing confidence to resolve ethical dilemmas they are experiencing
- Identifying resources for additional support

Any ethical dilemma that involves immediate potential risk to a client or worker should be immediately reported to the manager for support and further direction. As well, after using the worksheets in the toolkit, service providers are to seek support and approval relating to the determined course of action in dealing with the ethical dilemma.

While service providers need to document the decided course of action in the client health record minimally.. As part of our ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the toolkit,

once completed, service providers are required to forward the toolkit worksheets to ethics@cotainspires.ca

ii) Leadership and the Board of Directors

Cota's leadership and Board of Directors are committed to making decisions for the organization from an ethical lens. As such, each utilizes a reference sheet called a Criteria to Guide Ethical Decision Making to assist them in their decision making.

B3. RESEARCH

i) Research, Evidence and Best Practice

Cota supports the use of research, evidence and best practice information as it promotes high quality practices and allows us to keep pace with changes in the health and social service sector. As such, Cota provides access to resources through free website links, journals, articles and an organizational Associate membership to University of Toronto libraries with borrowing privileges. Access to the library membership is available through the Communications Lead.

ii) Research Ethics Review

A Research Ethics review is necessary where Cota is considering leading or participating in a research project. The purpose of a review is to ensure that appropriate research methodologies will be utilized, to assess the risks vs. the benefits to the participants, to ensure the protection of the privacy and confidentiality of the participants and ensure that there will be informed consent. Research projects are always subject to review if human subjects are involved.

All research proposals must be reviewed by the Ethics Lead, the Senior Management Team and approved by the Executive Director before the research project can proceed.

iii) Funding for Research

During the annual operating plan cycle, the Senior Management Team may identify projects to be undertaken in the next fiscal year. At that time, the team will determine whether the funding for any of the projects will be made available. Alternatively, if in-year resources become available, then research proposals may also be considered at that time.

B4. ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

i) Reporting of Ethical, Criminal or Professional Violations

Cota is committed to operating within our stated Vision, Mission and Values, which includes operating with respect and being fully accountable. This also includes and is not limited to adhering to the Guiding Ethical Principles of our Clinical Services, Cota's Code of Conduct and any legislation that may apply to our service delivery.

Cota is strongly committed to maintaining an environment in which employees, students, volunteers and contracted agents (workers) are respected and free to voice a concern or to report observations of ethical, criminal or professional violations without fear of intimidation and/or retribution. As such, Cota supports workers to report any violation that they become aware of, following the appropriate reporting process (Occurrence Reporting A-6-30), in the course of their employment, professional or volunteer activities.

ii) Ethics Oversight

To ensure ongoing development of ethical practice in the organization, Cota designates a senior manager as the Ethics Lead for the agency. The person's role is to oversee and guide the continued development of an ethical framework for Cota. The Ethics Lead will also be responsible for networking with other agencies in regards to ethics management and best practices. The Ethics Lead is accessible via e-mail address: ethics@cotainspires.ca.

iii) Management Support

Managers are a resource to staff for support and direction prior to implementation of any determined ethical action plan.

The Clinical Leadership Team also has the option of adding ethics as an agenda item in their clinical leadership meetings to problem-solve complex situations occurring at the program level. In this forum, managers are able to learn from each other and gain additional insight to make recommendations, decisions or improve ethical practices in their respective teams.

iv) Policy

Organizational support around ethics also includes direction through a number of policies and protocols as attached in the appendices.