

Organizational and Clinical Ethics

Standard GLD.07.00

Hospital leaders establish a framework for ethical management that promotes a culture of ethical practices and decision-making to ensure that patient care is provided within business, financial, ethical, and legal norms and protects patients and their rights.

Intent of GLD.07.00

Hospitals face many challenges in providing safe, high-quality health care. With advances in medical technology, financial constraints, and increasing expectations, ethical dilemmas and controversies are much more common. Hospital leaders have a professional and legal responsibility to create and promote an environment and culture that operates within an ethical framework.

The ethical framework must apply to both the hospital's business and clinical activities. Hospital leaders must demonstrate ethical behaviors and develop guidelines for organizational performance and conduct. Hospital leaders' actions and the hospital's guidelines for ethical behavior must be aligned with organizational policies and the hospital's vision, mission, and value statements.

The framework supports the hospital's health care practitioners, other staff, and patients and family when confronted by ethical dilemmas in patient care, such as interprofessional disagreements, disagreements between patients and their health care practitioners, and disagreements among family members about their relative who lacks decision-making capacity. Support is readily available and includes ethics resources and training for all staff. In addition, national and international norms related to human rights and professional ethics must be taken into consideration when creating an ethical framework and guiding documents.

The hospital operates within this framework to do the following:

- Disclose ownership and any conflicts of interest (for example, relationships between the referring physician and outside sources of laboratory or diagnostic imaging services).
- Honestly portray its services to patients.
- Protect confidentiality of patient information.
- Provide clear admission, transfer, and discharge policies.
- Bill accurately for its services and ensure that financial incentives and payment arrangements do not compromise patient care.
- Establish a mechanism by which health care practitioners and other staff may report clinical errors and raise ethical concerns with impunity, including disruptive staff behavior related to clinical and/or operational issues.
- Support an environment that allows free discussion of ethical concerns without fear of retribution.
- Provide an effective resolution to ethical conflicts within a clearly defined time frame.
- Ensure nondiscrimination in employment practices and provision of patient care in the context of the cultural and regulatory norms of the country.
- Reduce disparities in health care access and clinical outcomes by identifying vulnerable populations.

Measurable Elements of GLD.07.00

1. Hospital leaders establish a framework for the hospital's ethical management that promotes the following:
 - A culture of ethical practices and decision-making to ensure the protection of patients and their rights (*See also* COP.10.02, ME 2; HRP.01.02, ME 1; HRP.01.03, ME 3)
 - A mechanism by which health care practitioners and other staff may raise ethical concerns without fear of retribution (*See also* GLD.07.01, ME 5)
 - Structure(s) and processes support oversight of professional and business ethical issues.
2. The ethical framework ensures that patient care is provided within business, financial, ethical, and legal norms.
3. The hospital ensures nondiscrimination in employment practices and provision of patient care in the context of the cultural and regulatory norms of the country.
4. Hospital leaders identify applicable national and international ethical norms when developing the hospital's framework for ethical conduct.
5. The hospital accurately bills for services and ensures that financial incentives and payment arrangements do not impact patient care, treatment, or services.
6. The hospital provides an effective resolution to ethical conflicts that arise within a defined time frame.

Standard GLD.07.01

Hospital leaders create and maintain a culture of safety and quality throughout the hospital.

Intent of GLD.07.01

Safety and quality thrive in an environment that supports teamwork and respect for other people, regardless of their position in the hospital. Hospital leaders demonstrate their commitment to a culture of safety, and leaders set expectations for those who work in the hospital.

A culture of safety has been defined as “a collaborative environment in which clinicians treat each other with respect, leaders drive effective teamwork and promote psychological safety, teams learn from errors and near misses (or close calls), caregivers are aware of the inherent limitations of human performance in complex systems (stress recognition), and there is a visible process of learning and driving improvement through debriefings.”

Hospital leaders encourage teamwork and create structures, processes, and programs that allow this positive culture to flourish. Behavior that intimidates others and affects morale or staff turnover undermines a culture of safety and can be harmful to patient care. Leaders must address such behavior in individuals working at all levels of the hospital, including management, medical, clinical, and administrative staff, and governing body members. Key features of a program for a culture of safety include the following:

- Acknowledgment of the high-risk nature of a hospital's activities and the determination to achieve consistently safe operations
- An environment in which individuals can report errors or near misses without fear of reprimand or punishment
- Encouragement of collaboration across ranks and disciplines to seek solutions to patient safety problems
- Organizational commitment of resources, such as staff time, education, a safe method for reporting issues, and the like, to address safety concerns

Health care continues to have a culture of individual blame, which impairs the advancement of a safety culture. There are instances in which individuals should not be blamed for an error; for example, when there is poor communication between patient and staff, when there is a need for rapid decision-making, or when there are human factor design flaws in a treatment process. However, certain errors are the result of unsafe behavior and