

Ethical Decision-Making Framework (4-page Version)

I. Identify the Bioethical Issue

WHAT is the ETHICAL QUESTION?

II. Gather the Facts

KNOWN: What are the relevant facts? What are the essential biological, ethical, economic, social, or political considerations?

UNKNOWN: What additional facts, information, or evidence would be useful?

III. Consider the Controversy

WHO are the stakeholders? Which individuals or groups have an important stake in the outcome? Identify the concerns and values associated with each stakeholder.

stakeholder	stakeholder	stakeholder
↓	↓	↓
concerns/values	concerns/values	concerns/values
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

stakeholder	stakeholder	stakeholder
↓	↓	↓
concerns/values	concerns/values	concerns/values
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

IV. Address Alternatives	Pros	Cons
Option 1		
Option 2		
Option 3		

As you weigh each option, consider the following:

Rules/Duties: Does the option help support a good general moral rule for people to follow in similar situations?

Virtues: Does the option help support or develop the character traits we value most as individuals and in our society?

Outcomes: Does the option produce the most good and do the least harm?

Principles: Does the option address the bioethical principles (respect, do no harm/do good, and justice) involved?

Care: Does the option focus mostly on protecting vulnerable individuals and maintaining important relationships?

V. Decide

What is your decision?

Justify your decision, using the language of ethical concepts and principles described above.

1.

2.

3.

VI. Action and Evaluation

After acting on your decision, you can evaluate it afterwards. You can also consider the process of decision-making itself — was it fair and just?