



VON CANADA CODE OF ETHICS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a code of ethics is to make explicit the primary goals, values and obligations of the organization.

It is a succinct statement of the ethical obligations of every individual who is employed or volunteers for the organization. It is an expression of VON.s own understanding of its commitment to the clients we serve, to each other, and to society as written in its vision, mission, core values, principles and philosophy statements.

The VON Canada Code of Ethics consists of two parts: a VON value statement and an interpretive statement. They provide a framework for ethical analysis and decision-making and are intended to support professional codes of ethics (e.g. Canadian Nurses Association Code of Ethics).

A code of ethics is a dynamic document that provides guidelines for decision-making and self-evaluation for volunteers, service providers and administrators. As the health care delivery environment and social context change, the code may need revisions to reflect these changes.

RESPECT

VON employees and volunteers practice with compassion and show consideration for the autonomy, rights, dignity, worth and uniqueness of individuals, groups and communities.

Interpretive Statement

We respect the worth and uniqueness of individuals by:

- Acknowledging the right of individuals:
 - to accept or refuse care;
 - to live and die in comfort with dignity;
 - to develop and enhance their capacity for self-care;

- Promoting sensitivity to and knowledge about cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity;
- Refraining from discrimination or harassment in the areas of culture, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, or socio-economic status;
- Respecting privacy and maintaining confidentiality;
- Advocating for respectful treatment for all persons including safety, competence, individual rights, fairness, access to care;
- Building caring and compassionate relationships with colleagues and others with a commitment to fair treatment of individuals, integrity-preserving compromise, and to resolution of conflict;
- Declaring a conflict of interest and striving to resolve conflicts to ensure the safety and integrity of parties involved.

PARTICIPATION

VON employees and volunteers collaborate with each other and those external to VON to promote a healthier society.

Interpretive Statement

We collaborate with each other and those external to VON by:

- Inviting clients to partner in decisions about their care and service;
- Acknowledging the capabilities and resourcefulness of clients, employees, volunteers and community partners;
- Creating trust;
- Building accountability;
- Participating in identifying and responding to personal learning needs and the learning needs of the people and communities we serve;
- Bringing key stakeholders into the decision-making process;
- Collaborating with communities, government, professional organizations and each other to promote our shared goal of meeting the health and social needs of individuals and the public.

RESPONSIVENESS

VON employees and volunteers respond in a timely manner to opportunities to promote health and well-being.

Interpretive Statement

We respond in a timely manner to opportunities to promote health and well-being by:

- Seeking out, listening to and working with communities and clients to address needs they identify;
- Providing the right service, by the right provider in the right place;
- Being vigilant in seeking opportunities, through our charitable role, to respond to those who cannot access mainstream health care;
- Maintaining updated knowledge on current health care practice, trends and issues in order to respond to changing individual and community health care needs using current best practices;
- Responding to issues and feedback, both positive and negative, to pursue continuous quality improvement;
- Responding to a changing environment.

COURAGE

VON employees and volunteers act with courage when they advocate for change, stand firm in adversity, challenge injustices, and support innovation in the health care environment.

Interpretive Statement

VON employees and volunteers courageously shape the future of health care by:

- Empowering individuals, groups and communities to take action and resolve needs and issues;
- Advocating for change on behalf of individuals and local communities on health and social justice issues;

- Encouraging others to challenge us in the way we work to achieve/promote safe quality, ethical practice;
 - Supporting those who, in good faith, speak out against incompetent, unsafe or unethical practices within the VON organization;
 - Accepting and/or challenging changes in the internal and external health care environment with innovation and resolve;
 - Being leaders in developing health and social policy.
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Ethical decision-making is a process. There are seldom simple answers available to resolve complex questions. All of the VON community can access professional codes of ethics, the VON Canada Code of Ethics, support of colleagues and the VON Ethics Committee to provide support with difficult ethical questions.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

VON Canada Core Values Document: *approved by the VON Canada Board of Directors -- reviewed and confirmed by the Strategic Planning Committee June 17, 2003.*

“Six-Step Decision-making Framework” and a *“Glossary of terms: A Companion to Ethical Decision Making”* that will assist employees and volunteers to translate the code into action.

Canadian Association of Social Workers (1994). Code of Ethics.

Canadian Nurses Association (2002). Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses. www.can-nurses.ca

VON Canada, www.von.ca. VON E-Ethics

VON Client Services Standards Manual (1999). Advocacy 06-01-01

VON Canada Board Development Manual, Community Relations and Advocacy. www.von.ca

International Council of Nurses (1989). Code for Nurses-Ethical Concepts Applied to Nursing.

Canadian Association of Social Workers (1997). CASW Code of Ethics.

Covey, S. (1991). *Principled-centered leadership*. Toronto: Simon and Shuster.